# *Nicander of Colophon's* Theriaca

A LITERARY COMMENTARY

FLORIS OVERDUIN

MNEMOSYNE SUPPLEMENTS MONOGRAPHS ON GREEK AND LATIN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

BRILL

Nicander of Colophon's *Theriaca*

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*A Literary Commentary*

*By*

Floris Overduin

BRILL

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# Abbreviations

The works of ancient Greek authors are generally cited according to the abbreviations used in *Liddell-Scott-Jones*. For Latin authors I follow the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. When no such abbreviation exists I have given the full title, as is the case in e.g. some of the *Homeric Hymns*; I use *Phaen.* in addition to Arat. for the *Phaenomena*, and *Eur.* to indicate the *Europa* of Moschus. The *Theriaca* is abbreviated as *Ther.* in order to avoid confusion with *Th.* which is used for Hesiod's *Theogony*. Callimachus' *Aetia* is cited according to the edition of Harder; unless noted, this is the same as Pfeiffer's. Scholia on the *Theriaca* are cited according to the edition of Crugnola. The editions consulted are generally those of the digital *Thesausus Linguae Graecae*. In addition I use the following abbreviations for text editions other than those in the *TLG*, for cases in which I have given enumerations of different editions, or for cases in which confusion could arise.

| | |
|---|---|
| AB | C. Austin & G. Bastianini, *Posidippi Pellaei quae supersunt omnia*, Milan 2002. |
| *CA* | J.U. Powell, *Collectanea alexandrina*, Oxford 1925. |
| *CGF* | G. Kaibel, *Comicorum graecorum fragmenta*, Berlin 1899. |
| *CGFP* | C. Austin, *Comicorum graecorum fragmenta in papyris reperta*, Berlin 1973. |
| Courtney | E. Courtney, *The Fragmentary Latin poets*, Oxford 1993. |
| Degani | E. Degani, *Hipponactis testimonia et fragmenta*, Leipzig 1983. |
| Dettori | E. Dettori, *Filita grammatico. Testimonianze e frammenti*, Rome 2000. |
| Diggle | J. Diggle, *Euripides. Phaethon*, Cambridge 1970. |
| Dindorf | G. Dindorf, *Scholia graeca in Homeri Odysseam ex codicibus aucta et emendata*, Oxford 1855. |
| DK | H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin 1957. |
| *DNP* | H. Cancik & H. Schneider, *Der neue Pauly*, Stuttgart etc. 1996–2003. |
| *EGF* | M. Davies, *Epicorum graecorum fragmenta*, Göttingen 1988. |
| *Epigr. Gr.* | G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata graeca ex lapidibus conlecta*, Berlin 1878. |
| Erbse | H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in Homeri Iliadem* (*Scholia vetera*), Berlin 1969–1983. |
| F. | J.G. Frazer, *Apollodorus. The Library*, Cambridge, MA & London 1921. |
| *FGE* | D.L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, Cambridge 1981. |
| *FGrH* | F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Berlin 1923–. |
| *FHG* | C. Müller & Th. Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, Paris 1841–1870. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Floridi | L. Floridi, *Stratone di Sardi. Epigrammi*, Alessandria 2007. |
| *GDRK* | E. Heitsch, *Die Griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Göttingen 1961. |
| Gentili-Prato | B. Gentili & C. Prato, *Poetae elegiaci testimonia et fragmenta*, Leipzig 1979. |
| Geogh. | D. Geoghegan, *Anyte. The epigrams*, Rome 1979. |
| G-S | A.S.F. Gow & A.F. Scholfield, *Nicander*, Cambridge 1953. |
| Gostoli | A. Gostoli, *Terpander*, Rome 1990. |
| Gow | A.S.F. Gow, *Theocritus*, Cambridge 1952$^2$. |
| *GPh* | A.S.F. Gow & D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology. The Garland of Philip*, Cambridge 1968. |
| Gualandri | I. Gualandri, *Eutecnii paraphrasis in Nicandri theriaca*, Milan 1968. |
| Guhl | C. Guhl, *Die Fragmente des alexandrinischen Grammatikers Theon*, Hamburg 1969. |
| *GVI* | W. Peek, *Griechische Versinschriften I. Grabepigramme*, Berlin 1955. |
| H. | A.S. Hollis, *Callimachus. Hecale*, Oxford 2009$^2$. |
| Harder | M.A. Harder, *Callimachus. Aetia*, Oxford 2012. |
| Hausrath | A. Hausrath & H. Hunger, *Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum vol. 1.2*, Leipzig 1959$^2$. |
| *HE* | A.S.F. Gow & D.L. Page, *The Greek Anthology. Hellenistic Epigrams*, Cambridge 1965. |
| Hirschberger | M. Hirschberger, *Gynaikon Katalogos und Megalai Ehoiai*, München & Leipzig 2004. |
| Hollis | A.S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman poetry, c.60 B.C.–A.D. 20*, Oxford 2007. |
| Hordern | J.H. Hordern, *The Fragments of Timotheus of Miletus*, Oxford 2002. |
| Hordern *S.* | J.H. Hordern, *Sophron's mimes*, Oxford 2004. |
| *IEG*$^2$ | M.L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, Oxford 1989–1992. |
| *IG* | G. Kaibel, *Inscriptiones graecae vol. XIV*, Berlin 1890. |
| *IGUR* | L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones graecae urbis Romanae*, Rome 1968–1979. |
| K-A | R. Kassel & C. Austin, *Poetae comici graeci*, Berlin 1983–2001. |
| K-G | R. Kühner & B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache. Satzlehre*, Hannover 1955$^4$. |
| Kühn | C.G. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni opera omnia*, Leipzig 1821–1833. |
| Lenz-Behr | F.W. Lenz & C.A. Behr, *P. Aelii Aristidis opera quae exstant omnia*, Leiden 1976–1980. |
| *LfgrE* | B. Snell & H.J. Mette (eds.), *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*, Göttingen 1955–2010. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Lightfoot | J.L. Lightfoot, *Hellenistic Collection. Philitas. Alexander of Aetolia. Hermesianax. Euphorion. Parthenius*, Cambridge, MA 2009. |
| Livrea | E. Livrea, *Dionysii Bassaricon et Gigantiadis fragmenta*, Rome 1973. |
| LSJ | H.G. Liddell, R. Scott & H.S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon. With Revised Supplement*, Oxford 1996[9]. |
| Maas | P. Maas, *Greek Metre*, Oxford 1962. |
| Maehler | H. Maehler, *Bacchylidis Carmina cum fragmentis*, Leipzig 1970[10]. |
| Massimilla | G. Massimilla, *Callimaco, Aitia. Libri primo e secondo*, Pisa 1996. |
| Matthews | V.J. Matthews, *Antimachus of Colophon*, Leiden etc. 1996. |
| Matthews *Pan.* | V.J. Matthews, *Panyassis of Halikarnassos*, Leiden 1974. |
| *MG* | R. Wagner etc., *Mythographi Graeci*, Leipzig 1894–1902. |
| Musso | O. Musso, [*Antigonus Carystius*]. *Rerum mirabilium collectio*, Naples 1985. |
| MW | R. Merkelbach & M.L. West, *Fragmenta Hesiodea*, Oxford 1967. |
| Neri | C. Neri, *Erinna*, Bologna 2003. |
| Olson-Sens | S.D. Olson & A. Sens, *Matro of Pitane and the Tradition of Epic Parody in the Fourth Century BCE*, Atlanta, GA 1999. |
| O-S | S.D. Olson & A. Sens, *Archestratos of Gela*, Oxford 2000. |
| *PEG* | A. Bernabé, *Poetarum epicorum graecorum testimonia et fragmenta. Pars I*, Leipzig 1987. |
| Pf. | R. Pfeiffer, *Callimachus*, Oxford 1949–1953. |
| *PMG* | D.L. Page, *Poetae melici graeci*, Oxford 1962. |
| *PMGF* | D.L. Page & M. Davies, *Poetaerum melicorum graecorum fragmenta*, Oxford 1991. |
| Reed | J.D. Reed, *Bion of Smyrna*, Cambridge 1997. |
| Sandbach | F.H. Sandbach, *Plutarchi Moralia* (*vol. vii*), Leipzig 1967. |
| Sbardelli | L. Sbardella, *Filita. Testimonianze e frammenti poetici*, Rome 2000. |
| Scheer | E. Scheer, *Lycophronis Alexandra* (*vol. ii*), Berlin 1881–1908. |
| Schibli | H.S. Schibli, *Pherekydes of Syros*, Oxford 1990. |
| Schneider | O. Schneider, *Nicandrea. Theriaca et Alexipharmaca*, Leipzig 1856. |
| *SH* | H. Lloyd-Jones & P. Parsons (eds.), *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, Berlin & New York 1983. |
| Shipley | G. Shipley, *Pseudo-Skylax's Periplous*, Exeter 2011. |
| *SIG*[3] | W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge inscriptionum graecarum*, Leipzig 1915–1924. |
| Smyth | H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, Cambridge, MA 1920. |
| Spanoudakis | K. Spanoudakis, *Philitas of Cos*, Leiden 2002. |
| *SSH* | H. Lloyd-Jones (ed.), *Supplementum Supplementi Hellenistici*, Berlin & New York 2005. |
| *TGF* | A. Nauck, *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*, Leipzig 1889[2]. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *TGL* | B. Hase, G. Dindorf & L. Dindorf (eds.), *Thesaurus graecae linguae*, Paris 1831–1865. |
| Theiler | W. Theiler, *Poseidonios. Die Fragmente*, Berlin 1982. |
| *TrGF* | B. Snell & R. Kannicht (eds.), *Tragicorum graecorum fragmenta*, Göttingen 1971–2004. |
| Van Groningen | B.A. van Groningen, *Euphorion*, Amsterdam 1977. |
| Van Thiel | H. van Thiel, *Scholia* D *in Iliadem*, 2000, online publication, http://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/1810/. |
| Voigt | A.M. Voigt, *Sappho et Alcaeus*, Amsterdam 1971. |
| W. | R. Wagner, *Apollodori Bibliotheca*, 1894 Leipzig. |
| Wyss | B. Wyss, *Antimachi Colophonii reliquiae*, Berlin 1936. |

# Introduction

## 1 Preliminaries

In my approach to commenting on Nicander's *Theriaca* it has not been my goal to provide the reader with elucidations in matters of herpetology, botany, biology, entomology, pharmacology or medicine, fields in which I have no experience or knowledge whatsoever, and in which I have, admittedly, little interest. The title of this study, which claims to be a 'literary commentary', has two important implications that need to be taken into account at the outset of this book: (i) attention will be paid to the different dimensions of the adjective 'literary' with regard to the *Theriaca* of Nicander of Colophon, including matters of narratology, mythology, aetiology, diction, genre, tradition, poetic-self awareness, and aesthetics; (ii) matters of grammar, textual criticism, and details pertaining to the countless *realia* are *not* the focus of my attention, and will therefore only be treated as far as relevant to my main thesis or as a necessary aid to the reader.[1]

What, then, is my main thesis? The *Theriaca* has received a varied reception since its origination, probably somewhere in the second century BCE. The poem's reception in modern criticism has been dominated by two main objections: its lack of literary merit as a poem, and its lack of practical usefulness as a handbook on snakebites.[2] However, although many critics thus have

1 For such details the reader is referred to Gow & Scholfield (1953, 18–25, 228–237 et al.) and more particularly to the recent commentaries of Touwaide (1997), Jacques (2002), and Spatafora (2007a), who provide ample detail and discussion of many particulars both ancient and modern, and to the many studies that have dealt with single aspects of Nicander's often tantalising descriptions. Occasional remarks as provided by me do not claim anything more than to give a helping hand in staying on track when studying the commentary. For practical (but not necessarily exact) translations of the names of plants I primarily follow Gow & Scholfield (which are usual the same as LSJ). As to the identification of the different snakes, I have added the scientific Latin names as proposed by Leitz (1997), who studied the particular serpents treated by the poet. The reader is referred to the section numbers of Leitz's study.

2 For the first objection see e.g. Wilamowitz 1924, 226; Körte 1925, 213–214; Kroll 1936, 258; Lesky 1963, 805; Effe 1977, 59; Bulloch 1985b, 63. An implicit verdict is given by Hutchinson (1988) and Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004), who do not even mention the *Theriaca* in their studies of the literary aspects of Hellenistic poetry. For the second objection, essentially based on the practical limitations of Nicander's information (such as frequent lack of proper amounts, unclear

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condemned the *Theriaca* as a failure on both accounts, in the last decades the poem has seen a modest reappraisal that can be characterised by two different approaches. On the one hand we find those who ask attention for an alternative perspective of the poem's subject matter. Effe argues that the poem is concerned with language rather than snakes. As such, any subject matter would have sufficed, and Nicander's peculiar choice should be viewed with Aratus in mind, who showed the way in choosing an unlikely subject matter as the starlit sky for his *Phaenomena*.[3] Crugnola focuses on language as well, but is more concerned with detailed adaptations of poets like Homer and Apollonius in Nicander's diction, without, however, seeking intertextual relevance in such reminiscences.[4] Toohey underlines the aspect of learned playfulness, and adds the poet's preponderantly negative depiction of the world, pointing out that the poet really shines when it comes to horror.[5] Not factual correctness, but painting picturesque abhorrence, combined with a macabre voyeurism is what the poet aims to achieve.[6] Spatafora, in turn, has focused on the poet's ability to describe natural beauty in appealing verses, depicting plants with their greenery in their habitat of forests, fields, and watersides.[7] Others, like Magnelli, have shown Nicander's concern with intertextuality, alluding to snake depictions in for instance the *Argonautica*.[8] These approaches all steer away from the question of exactness and functionality, towards a reading of the *Theriaca* as a piece of literature.

On the other hand Jacques, whose recent edition has made a substantial contribution to Nicandrean scholarship, argues for a proper appreciation of Nicander as poet and doctor at the same time, with equal weight given to both dimensions.[9] This approach brings us back to the problematic assessment of

---

divisions between recipes, impractical ingredients, superstitious elements, and unclarity due to diction and metre) see Kroll 1936, 256–257; Effe 1977, 60–61; Bulloch 1985b, 63–64.

3 Effe 1977, 57–58.

4 Crugnola 1961, 119–152.

5 Such negative depictions can even be literal, as in *Ther*. 759, where Egypt is qualified as an οὐλοὸς αἶα ('grim country'). For 'darkness' as an element of Nicander's aesthetics see Sistakou 2012, 193–250.

6 Toohey 1996, 65–73.

7 Spatafora 2005, 232–240.

8 Magnelli 2006, 187–198.

9 See Jacques 2002; see also Jacques 1979 and 2007. A leading Nicandrean scholar, Jean-Marie Jacques (1924–2008) did not live to see volume I of his three-part Budé edition published, after the publication of volumes III in 2002 and II in 2007; it is unclear whether the first volume is to appear posthumously.

Nicander as a medical expert and doctor, although Jacques rightly allows for Nicander's qualities *qua* poet. His approach, as well as that of others, thus aims to sort out Nicander's claims to truth in matters of snakes and plants. In Jacques' approach poetic diction is not ignored, but a literary view of the poem is never separated from (and sometimes hampered by) technicalities of the *realia*. Metre, diction and poetic descriptions are thus always functional, serving to complement the contents of the poem, rather than serving poetic purposes in their own right.[10] Although my approach to the *Theriaca* and its subject is a strictly literary one, this does not mean that the subject chosen by Nicander for the *Theriaca* lacks any relevance whatsoever. As Jacques points out, the dangers of poisoning, either through venomous bites or stings by animals (as treated in the *Theriaca*), or through poisoning by plants (as treated in the *Alexipharmaca*), was real enough.[11] Yet this reality not necessarily implies that Nicander's concern was with poisoning rather than poetry. Nicander perhaps could have presented a useful handbook if that was what he wanted, but I hold the view that this was not his objective from the start.

My study aims to provide a picture of the *Theriaca* as a poem with its own literary merits. I will follow the ideas proposed by Effe, Toohey, Spatafora and Magnelli, providing an assessment of the place of the *Theriaca* within the traditions of didactic poetry, Alexandrian aesthetics, literary motifs, structural devices, and narrative aspects. In this way I hope to show that the *Theriaca* should be considered a work of art, albeit a peculiar one, rather than the result of a doctor venturing on poetry. To be sure, the poem's artfulness is not apparent, and only a thorough study of Nicander's literary techniques enables us to appreciate his attempt to turn science into art. Considering the poem's subject and its presentation it is remarkable indeed that the *Theriaca* should primarily be a work of art, and as such it is not unproblematic that Nicander chose to present a poem whose artfulness is veiled to such a large extent. Yet close reading reveals that a non-literary reading of the text yields little with regard to practicality, and that it is primarily as a work of art that the *Theriaca* makes proper sense. Through this approach it will become clear that Nicander's lack of correct information with regard to the treatment of snakebites is not a matter of carelessness, but the result of an approach in which correctness of scientific detail is ultimately irrelevant.

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10 A similar view (viz. that of Nicander as a doctor and medical expert no less than a poet) is taken by Knoefel & Covi 1991.

11 Jacques 2002, xv–xx, followed by Clauss 2006, 160 n. 2.

This study aims to look further than previous commentaries, not in terms of learnedness, or with regard to the material collected—which would be *hybris* indeed considering the enormously detailed and laborious work done by Nicandrean scholars so far—, but with a focus on those elements that are there for the sake of artistic pleasure. As such the commentary should be read as a complement to those of Jacques and Spatafora, in order to adjust the picture painted by them, and to prevent a too narrow approach to the *Theriaca*.

The following chapters aim to draw attention to the multifarious facets of such a literary approach to the *Theriaca*. The introduction is followed by a line-by-line commentary which serves as an illustration of the poet's approach to his material, exemplifying single elements of Nicander's literary technique as treated in the Introduction.

A final remark needs to be made pertaining to my use of the terms allusion, reference, verbal echo, imitation, reminiscence and similar qualifications. As a technical term intertextuality, and the apparatus of terminology that comes with it, has been used quite differently by classicists and literary theorists, focusing either on the author or the reader. Those following modern approaches tend to leave the author's intention aside, claiming that we simply cannot know what is on the author's mind. Be that as it may, classicists, particularly those working on poetry, have been aware for a long time of the phenomenon of meaningful reuse of material of contemporary or earlier poets. What helps is that we are often dealing with poets operating in a small circle, and relying for their inspiration on yet another relatively small circle. Moreover, we have plenty of evidence that poets like Homer and Vergil were well-known to all. Although we cannot know what any particular poet was thinking about at any given moment, we do know that many poets knew each other well, and knew the classics of their past too. Therefore, when I suggest that Nicander is thinking about a certain line in the *Iliad* I do not claim to know Nicander's thoughts, but what I do want to point out is that it is likely that Nicander consciously modelled his material on a certain predecessor. This may seem problematic from a methodical point of view, yet I consider it the best way to present the reader with what seem to me valid possibilities that need to be taken into account by any reader interested in Nicander's literary approach.

## 2 Nicander

Like most ancient poets, Nicander is an obscure figure. Although some biographical information has come down to us, very little is corroborated by his poetry itself. The following sections focus on the evidence for the poet of the

*Theriaca* from the perspectives of his activities as a poet, as a priest, and as a medical expert, and sum up the available information with regard to his dates.[12]

### 2.1 *Poet*

Nicander is primarily known to us as a poet, but it is probable that he also wrote prose. As to the latter the only clues we have are the titles of some of the other writings attributed to him, which have, however, not been transmitted. The works Αἰτωλικά, Κιμμέριοι and Κολοφωνιακά could be either in verse or prose, but Γλῶσσαι and Περὶ ποιητῶν (also known as Περὶ τῶν ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ποιητῶν) are likely to have been prose works.[13]

Nicander calls himself a ὑμνοπόλος in line 629 of the *Alexipharmaca*, a rare noun for poet or singer that was used previously by Simonides (*AP* 7.25.2) to qualify Anacreon, and by Empedocles (fr. 146 DK), who ranks the ὑμνοπόλοι among the μάντεις (seers), ἰητροί (doctors) and πρόμοι (rulers), viz. as categorised professions. In either case the noun is used for (professional) poets in general, not epic poets in particular. A fragment from the lost *Ophiaca* (fr. 31 G-S) shows that Nicander wrote elegiacs as well. Later authors do not refer to Nicander as a poet in any detailed way. Athenaeus (3.126b, 7.288c) calls him an ἐποποιός, 'epic poet'. The *Vita Nicandri*, as transmitted in the scholia, merely calls him a ποιητής. He is, however, called an ἐπέων ποητής in a Delphian decree in which a *proxenia* is granted to a certain 'Nicander of Colophon, epic poet'. Although the dating of the decree is uncertain, the poet in question can hardly be anyone other than the poet of the *Theriaca*.[14]

### 2.2 *Priest*

Apart from being a poet, Nicander is said to have been a priest at the sanctuary of Apollo in Clarus, some 13 km south of the city of Colophon.[15] In this capacity

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12 See also Fantuzzi 2000.

13 See Gow & Scholfield 1953, 201–220 for the fragments of Nicander, most of which are found in the scholia or Athenaeus. If the geographical-historical epics are to be attributed to another Nicander (see section 2.4) the titles Αἰτωλικά, Κιμμέριοι and Κολοφωνιακά are likely to belong to the latter, not the didactic poet.

14 For the Delphian decree, found in 1882, see Dittenberger, *SIG*[3] 452; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 4. The dating of the decree is problematic, varying from the mid-third century to a later date around 210 BCE, as has been suggested recently by Massimilla 2000, 132–135; see Jacques 2007, 104. For further treatment of the problem of Nicander's person see Pasquali 1913, 55–111, Gow & Scholfield 1953, 3–8, Cameron 1995, 194–207. The scheduled first volume of the Budé edition of Nicander, in which the latest evidence was expected to be presented, will perhaps not appear, considering J.M. Jacques' death in 2008.

15 For an overview of the history of the sanctuary of Clarus see Parke 1985, 112–170.

he is referred to by Plutarch as ἱερεύς (*De E* 386b11) and προφήτης (*De defect.* 438b9). Nicander himself does not mention this activity explicitly, but his reference in *Ther.* 958 to Clarus as his native town, can be read in the light of Clarus' single-most important feature, the sanctuary of Apollo Clarius, which had some reknown in antiquity.[16] In the opening lines of the *Alexipharmaca* Nicander states more clearly that he lives 'sitting besides the tripods of Apollo in Clarus', although we have to be wary of identifying the didactic teacher with the poet.[17] Moreover, fr. 31 G-S from the lost *Ophiaca*, which tells how Apollo Clarius cleared his sanctuary from noxious animals, evidently shows the perspective of an inhabitant of Clarus.[18]

The sanctuary is well-attested in earlier literature, and was still operational in the Imperial Age.[19] To the audience any reference to Clarus must instantly have triggered the association with the famous sanctuary and strengthened the idea that Nicander was a priest at the sanctuary of Apollo.

### 2.3 *Doctor*

Nicander's identity as a poet and a priest, although not devoid of issues, is at least quite certain. Less easy to assess is his status as a doctor.[20] The assertion that Nicander was a professional, or at least an expert physician, is mainly based on intratextual evidence from the *Theriaca* and the *Alexipharmaca*.[21] Although such an approach is not illogical in itself, the fact that Nicander wrote on certain topics does not prove that the material presented is based on his personal knowledge or skills. A comparison can be made with Aratus, whose material in the *Phaenomena* is derived from Eudoxus' prose treaty on stars and

16 It has been suggested, however, that Nicander's notoriously difficult diction was somehow connected to his office as a priest, in which case his skill in giving oracles is reflected in his poetry; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 5 n. 6.

17 *Al.* 11, ἑζόμενοι τριπόδεσσι πάρα Κλαρίοις Ἑκάτοιο.

18 The story is confirmed by Aelian (*NA* 10.49), but as this is also the source for Nicander's fr. 31 G-S it is likely that Aelian based his inclusion of the remarkable fact on a single source, viz. Nicander. If we are to believe the Suda (ν 374), Nicander not only wrote about the sanctuary where he was appointed, but produced three books on *all* oracles, Περὶ χρηστηρίων πάντων βιβλία τρία.

19 Cf. *h.Ap.* 40, *h.Dian.* 5, Anan. fr. 1.2 *IEG*$^2$, Th. 3.33.1–2, [Scyl.] 98.20, Call. *Ap.* 70, A.R. 1.308, Ov. *Met.* 1.516, 11.413. Its mention by Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.54), *adpellitque Colophona ut Clarii Apollinis oraculo uteretur*, shows that its fame had not waned in the first century CE.

20 See Gow & Scholfield 1953, 18; Knoefel & Covi 1991, 41–50.

21 For the limitations of such an approach to the 'narratorial quasi-biography' see section 4.1.

star signs.[22] There is little reason to assume that Aratus himself acquired any of this knowledge first hand. In fact, Hipparchus' commentary on the *Phaenomena* serves (at least partly) to correct some of the errors Aratus made due to lack of proper understanding of his source, despite the commentator's sympathy for the poet. A similar case has been made for Nicander, whose knowledge seems to be based on several prose treatises, predominantly one by a certain Apollodorus of Alexandria.[23] Even in antiquity it was acknowledged that both Aratus and Nicander succeeded in their poems, without being particularly well-informed with respect to their topics.[24]

According to the Suda Nicander wrote a paraphrase of pseudo-Hippocrates' *Prognostica*, yet he did so in hexameters, which seems to show that his concern was with poetry rather than medicine.[25] Other evidence has been proposed as well, based on Nicander's supposed close connection to the court of the Attalids in Pergamum.[26] Jacques assumes that Nicander was part of a milieu of

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22 Aratus' dependency on Eudoxus is maintained by Kidd (1997, 14–18); Martin (1998a, lxxxvi–xcvii) credits Aratus with less dependency on his source.

23 For Apollodorus see Jacques 2002, xxxiii–vi. The thesis of Apollodorus (or perhaps Apollophanes; see Touwaide 1991, 70–71) as the *iologorum dux* on whom Nicander relies, was proposed by Otto Schneider; Schneider 1856, 181–201. The degree of Nicander's reliance on Apollodorus and others is not easy to determine. Discussion of the fragments of Apollodorus (consisting of scholia on Nicander, and references in Pliny, Aelian and Athenaeus) and his use by Nicander, is found in Knoefel & Covi (1991, 5–16), who largely reject Schneider's thesis, as does Jacques 2002, xlix–lii. According to general opinion the thesis of Apollodorus as Nicander's key source was too rash, based on too little research, too one-sided, and did not allow properly for indirect influence through other intermediary sources; cf. Touwaide 1991, 71–73. It has become evident that Nicander used other sources as well, e.g. Aristotle for the section on spiders, Theophrastus for information on plants, and the *Theriaca* of Numenius for his recipes, whereas the use of Theophrastus' Περὶ δακετῶν καὶ βλητικῶν (the third book of the Περὶ ζῴων) is probable, as is the use of the Ῥιζοτομικόν of Diocles of Carystus (fourth century BCE), and the Θεραπεῖαι of Praxagoras of Cos; see Knoefel & Covi, 17–23, Jacques 2002, lii–lvi and 269–272, Spatafora 2007a, 11–13; De Stefani 2006a, 55–65. For other possible sources see Jacques 2002, and De Stefani 2006a, who points out (following Oikonomakos 1999) many similarities between Nicander and the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. For the ystematics of the treatments presented in the *Theriaca* see Spatafora 2007b.

24 Cic. *de Orat.* 1.69, *Etenim si constat inter doctos, hominem ignarum astrologiae ornatissimis atque optimis versibus Aratum de caelo stellisque dixisse; si de rebus rusticis hominem ab agro remotissimum Nicandrum Colophonium poetica quadam facultate, non rustica, scripsisse praeclare*, […]

25 Suda ν 374. Nicander is referred to here as ἅμα γραμματικός τε καὶ ποιητὴς καὶ ἰατρός.

26 This connection is based on fr. 104 G-S, normally referred to as the *Hymn to Attalus*, of

θηριακοί, an aristocratic order specialised in poisons and antidotes.[27] As highly valued experts they had close connections with kings and courts, and were likely to be employed as private doctors to the court. The assumption that Nicander was somehow connected to Pergamum, being comparatively close to Clarus, Nicander's base of operation, is not unlikely, nor is it implausible that he met certain experts at the court of the Attalids, from whom he got the idea of composing two poems on poison. This is, however, not an indication that Nicander was a doctor himself.[28]

In later tradition Nicander appears in a couple of anonymous epigrams found in the ninth book of the *Greek Anthology*.[29] Here Nicander is depicted as an expert, ranked among the mythical healers Paieon, Cheiron, Asclepius, and Hippocrates, and is even called the offspring (γενέθλη) of Paieon. These epigrams are witnesses of a somewhat odd tradition, in which Nicander was considered an important source of knowledge, and consequently the status of expert was granted to him. Yet this tradition says more about the association of Nicander with medical expertise than about Nicander's status as a physician *per se*. The question whether or not Nicander was knowledgeable with regard to his subject matter is ultimately difficult to resolve, but the fact that no early source pictures the poet as a doctor should weigh heavily in favour of approaching Nicander primarily as a poet.[30]

Nicander's status as doctor-poet, with equal weight given to both sides of his capacities, has been propagated several times.[31] Jacques' statement that poetry is simply preferred to prose by some, even in the Hellenistic age, in which prose had taken over poetry's role as vehicle for learning, is not backed by evidence.[32]

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which five lines are transmitted in the *Vita Nicandri* in the scholia. For the problematic identification of Attalus see e.g. Bethe 1918, 110–112; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 6; Massimilla 2000, 128; Magnelli 2006, 185–187.

27 Jacques 2002, xvi–xx; 2007, 108–109.

28 Jacques' suggestion that Nicander's *Georgica* was occasioned by Attalus III's interest in garden plants, albeit not an implausible one, pleads in favour of Nicander as a poet, rather than an expert in botany; Jacques 2007, 105–106.

29 *AP* 9.211–213.

30 Cf. Scarborough (1984, 27), who repeats that "Nicander shows no expertise whatever in the subjects or specifics of poisons and toxicology in the *Theriaca* […]". For various arguments against Nicander's credibility as an expert see Overduin 2009a and 2009b.

31 Jacques 1979; 2002; 2007.

32 Jacques' suggestion (2007, 101–102) that Empedocles already combined serious learning with poetry, proves little, considering the lack of a well-established or even well-developed tradition of prose learning in Empedocles' age. The fact that Aristotle calls Empedocles a

I will argue that his view that in the *Theriaca* and the *Alexipharmaca* the scientific and the literary are inseparable is not easy to maintain throughout.[33]

### 2.4 *Two Nicanders?*

Discussion about Nicander's date, the confusing data in the different *vitae Nicandri* as well as the scholia, the multifarious works ascribed to him, and the problematic dating of the Delphian decree have led to the conclusion that there may have been two poets called Nicander of Colophon, both of them epic poets.[34] This thesis was first proposed by Pasquali, who assumes the existence of an elder Nicander in the middle of the third century BCE, and a younger, who was active during the reign of Attalus III (138–133 BCE).[35]

If we allow that there were two Nicanders, then the older one, the son of Anaxagoras, is assumed to be the author of the works dealing with antiquarian and regional history (to judge by their titles, *Europia, Thebaica, Sicelia, Aitolica, Cimmerioi, Colophoniaca*).[36] He is probably the poet that is honoured in the Delphian decree, a favour he returned with a song composed in their honour. The younger Nicander, perhaps related to him, the son of Damaeus, is then credited with the two extant poems on poison, as well as the *Georgics*, *Heteroeumena*, the *Melissurgica*, and most of the poetic fragments.[37] Pasquali's observation about the existence of two Nicanders has been accepted by many, yet no consensus has been reached as to the proper dating of either Nicander, nor about the question which Nicander wrote which works.[38] Moreover,

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φυσιολόγος, not a ποιητής, has to do with the issue of mimetic/amimetic poetry, and has little relevance for the assessment of Nicander's status.

33 Jacques 2007, 106.

34 The four *vitae Nicandri* are assembled along with other evidence and discussed in Gow & Scholfield 1953, 4–8.

35 Pasquali 1913. See also Fornaro 1999, and Fantuzzi 2000.

36 The second *vita* of Aratus (Martin 1974, 11–13) mentions a Νικάνδρος ὁ μαθηματικός as a contemporary of Aratus. Although the designation is puzzling it is likely, within the context of the *vita*, that the older Nicander is meant here, who is, however, referred to as the author of the *Theriaca*.

37 Gow & Scholfield (1953, 8) suggest that the older Nicander is perhaps a grandfather or an uncle of the younger, which is not improbable, considering the hereditary status of the priesthood at Clarus, which is stated in the *Vita Nicandri* from Σ *Ther*. (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 3), ἐκ προγόνων τὴν ἱερωσύνην δεξάμενον; cf. Jacques 2007, 105. The Suda (ν 374) gives Xenophanes, not Damaeus, as his father's name. For Damaeus see fr. 110 G-S, αἰνήσεις υἱῆα πολυμνήστοιο Δαμαίου.

38 Despite Pasquali's proposal the problematic chronology still allows for the possibility that there is only one Nicander after all; see Fornaro 1999, 898 and Massimilla 2000, 135–136.

the opinion that it is the younger Nicander who wrote the *Theriaca*, has been challenged again.[39]

### 2.5 *Date*

Inextricably connected to this issue is the dating of the poet of the *Theriaca*.[40] Our most important sources for this are the *vitae Nicandri* transmitted in the scholia, the Suda, notes on the lives of Theocritus, Aratus and Lycophron as ancient testimonia, the fragment of the *Hymn to Attalus* (fr. 104 G-S) and the Delphian inscription (mentioned in Introduction 2.1) in which a Nicander of Colophon is named. From these testimonia the following options can be gathered: (1) Nicander lived in the third century BCE, during the reign of Ptolemaeus Philadelphus (282–246) and was a contemporary of Callimachus, Aratus and Theocritus.[41] This view, which has been dismissed for a long time, has recently been given serious consideration again.[42] (2) Nicander lived during the reign of Attalus I (241–197), the conqueror of the Gauls, which coincides with the statement that Nicander lived twelve olympiads after Aratus, and overlaps with the statement that Nicander lived during the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (205–180).[43] (3) Nicander lived during the reign of Attalus II Philadelphus (159–138). (4) Nicander lived during the reign of Attalus III Philometor (138–133).[44]

Apart from the extratextual biographical information as found in Greek testimonia there are literary arguments that need to be taken into account when establishing a date, or at least a *terminus post quem* for the poet of the *Theriaca*. A first source that seems to have been used by Nicander is Numenius of Heraclea, a writer on poisons, who wrote a poem called *Theriaca* as well.[45] He was a pupil of the physician Dieuces, and was thought not to have written

39 Cameron 1995, 200–202.

40 See Pasquali 1913; Bethe 1918; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 4–8. For a useful summary of the issue see Magnelli 2006, 185–187; Jacques 2007, 101–107.

41 As suggested by the *vita* of Aratus; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 4: C ii.

42 Cameron (1995, 194–210) attaches more value to the biographical data from the *vitae* of Aratus and Nicander. For an alternative reading of the curious biographical relation of Aratus and Nicander see Effe 1972.

43 See Gow & Scholfield 1953, 4: C iv.

44 As stated in the Suda, which says that Nicander was born during the reign of the youngest and last Attalus, who deserved the title Γαλατονίκης and was deposed by the Romans. But the conqueror of the Gauls is Attalus I, whereas it was Attalus III who endowed the Romans with his kingdom; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 6 n. 1. The evidence for the periods of Attalus I and III is partly based on the so-called *Hymn to Attalus* (fr. 104 G-S). It is not clear, however, which of the Attalids the hymn was written for.

45 Extant fragments are collected in *SH* 589–594 and Jacques 2002, 304–306.

earlier than the mid-third century BCE. This date has been contested lately, as Numenius is now assigned to the end of the fourth century BCE.[46] Secondly, several Alexandrian poets of the third century BCE have left their marks on the *Theriaca*. The story of Orion as told in the proem of the *Theriaca* appears to refer to Aratus' treatment of the mythical hunter in the *Phaenomena*.[47] Nicander has adapted the description of the snake guarding the Golden Fleece in Apollonius' *Argonautica* to fit his description of the asp, and in addition we occasionally find remininiscences from Callimachus' hymns.[48] Traces of the recondite Hellenistic poet Euphorion of Chalcis have been pointed out as well, which also holds true for the fragmentary poets Hermesianax and Philitas.[49] The lack of influences from later Hellenistic authors, such as Moschus, could be taken as a sign that Nicander lived too early to know them, but considering the paucity of extant works from the middle and late Hellenistic period, such an argument from silence is feeble.[50] The problem is ultimately that none of these authors help us to establish a later date than the mid third century BCE, nor do they shed light on the issue of the two Nicanders.[51]

A non-literary approach to historical information distilled from Nicander's poetry suggests another *terminus post quem*, based on a piece of topographical information in the *Alexipharmaca*. According to D'Hautcourt the ruins referred to in *Al.* 11–15 belong to the town of Heracleia Pontica, destroyed by Prusias II shortly before 154 BCE.[52] Here a date in the middle or the second half of the second century BCE emerges.

To sum up: the date of the poet of the *Theriaca* depends on whether one assumes one Nicander, in which case both the middle and the end of the third century BCE are possible, or two Nicanders, in which case our poet lived in the second half of the second century BCE—assuming that it is the younger Nicander who is responsible for the *Theriaca*. At any rate it can safely be assumed that textual and intertextual references to most of the Alexandrian poets of the mid-third century are chronologically sound; there are no instances in the *Theriaca* that give reason to believe that Nicander is the imitated rather than the imitator.

46 For the later date see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 8; for the earlier date see Fornaro 2000, 1049.

47 See Effe 1974b; Magnelli 2006, 196–197.

48 See Magnelli 2006, 187–198.

49 For Euphorion see Magnelli 2006, 195; for Hermesianax see Kobiliri 1998; for Philitas see Bing 2003.

50 Magnelli 2006, 201–202.

51 See also Clauss 2006, 161 n. 4.

52 See D'Hautcourt 2001, 191–198.

### 2.6 *Conclusion*

Although some focus has been given to Nicander in his capacities as doctor and priest, the claim of neither role can be maintained easily. Ultimately the only certainty we have is that Nicander was a poet. His activities as a doctor do not follow clearly from the evidence, nor does Nicander emerge as a priest if we leave the intratextual evidence aside. Speculation with regard to Nicander's functions as doctor and priest should therefore not detract from our main objective, which is the study of Nicander in his capacity as poet.

## 3 Didactic Poetry

The *Theriaca* is a poem in the tradition of didactic epic.[53] Although this observation is blatantly evident, a proper assessment of the genre is relevant in order to find out what it is exactly that makes us qualify the *Theriaca* as didactic. Moreover, in terms of a 'didactic tradition' one needs to chart the elements that make up the genre in order to establish a proper connection between Hesiod as literary forebear or even instigator of the genre, and Aratus and Nicander as poets following in the footsteps of their didactic predecessor. This chapter thus contends that the *Theriaca* fits the notion of didactic poetry, based on a broad approach to the characteristics that define the genre.

### 3.1 *Preliminaries and Definition*

The genre of didactic poetry in antiquity has always posed problems for modern literary scholarship. The union of two ostensible opposites, viz. poetry on the one side, associated with emotions, a personal voice, and aesthetics, and learning on the other, considered abstract, exact and detached from personal views, is often considered impossible, as both elements seem to be mutually exclusive: poetry is intrinsically inadequate for learning, and learning is hardly a suitable subject for poetry.[54] Yet the very existence of highly successful didactic poems, both in antiquity and in modern times, is proof of the validity and vitality of such a union.

Any discussion of didactic poetry in relation to classical literature starts with the well-known issue of the insecure or even non-existent status of didactic poetry as a genre *sui generis* in antiquity, summed up in the lack of a proper

53 On the scopes and limits of Nicander's didactic attitude see also Magnelli 2010.

54 For the issue of didactic poetry as a problematic genre see Effe 1977, 9–22; Dalzell 1996, 9–10; Kruschwitz 2005, 10–15; Harder 2007, 205; Sider 2014.

term for didactic poetry both in Greek and in Latin.[55] The common classification of the poetry of Hesiod and the like is thus simply 'epic', functioning as a generic term, and implying that the poetry in question is written in dactylic hexameters, the metre of epic.[56] This characterisation signals the normal division of poetry by metre, not by genre, if indeed such a well-defined concept existed in the minds of the poets in antiquity.[57] The insecure status of didactic poetry seems, however, to be a technical question, dealing with semantics, not tradition. As Dalzell and others have pointed out, there are clear signs that poets in antiquity writing within the didactic tradition were well aware of the demands of didactic as a specific sub-genre, and did not hesitate to pay tribute to their predecessors.[58]

A second commonplace found in the treatment of didactic literature is the observation that in a certain sense all literature is didactic.[59] Even when this notion is narrowed down to classical poetry we find that didactic poetry is in fact only slightly different from other kinds of poetry.[60] Any kind of literature is based on the model of an author, the material conveyed by this author, and an audience to receive this material, be it a single reader or listeners present at a performance. As such, didactic poetry follows this same model as poetry, or indeed literature in general.[61] Moreover, from the very beginnings of Greek literature all poetry was considered to be educational. This goes without saying for Homer, who was considered a teacher of all moral, practical and religious aspects of life, educating men how to be brave, how to run a household, or

55 As reflected by e.g. Quintilian (10.1.46–57), who labels such diverging poets as Homer, Hesiod, Aratus, Nicander, Theocritus, Panyasis, and Euphorion all as epic poets (*epici*). Lucretius is likewise grouped with Ennius and Vergil; Volk 2002, 28–29.

56 Thus all epic poetry (including didactic) is simply referred to as ἔπη, a term of genre still used as late as the Suda, without further distinctions. As Ford (1992, 29 with n. 40) points out, the qualification ἔπη is even broader, including all unsung poetry, not limited to hexameter poetry. For the use of metre as a criterion for genre see Volk 2002, 27.

57 For the emphasis on metre *per se* as the fundamental criterium for the difference between prose and poetry cf. Gorg. *Hel.* 9, τὴν ποίησιν ἅπασαν καὶ νομίζω καὶ ὀνομάζω λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον. For the element of genre, and the lack of theory of genre in antiquity see Volk 2002, 26–27. For discussion of other classical sources, in particular the important anonymous *Tractatus Coislinianus*, see Gale 2004, 100–104 and Sider 2014, 15–16.

58 Dalzell 1996, 21–23.

59 Dalzell 1996, 8–11.

60 The antique awareness, however vague, that didactic poetry was somehow different than 'regular' epic is discussed by Volk 2002, 30–34.

61 Fakas 2001, 85.

how to deal with the gods.[62] Hesiod's poetry may be different than Homer's according to our classification of genre, but judging from writings such as the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*, we can conclude that to a Greek audience the poets were perfectly commensurable, presenting teachings of different, but comparable subjects. This notion of educational, hence useful poetry is found throughout ancient literature, which shows the difficulty of hard and fast distinctions between narrative and didactic poetry.[63]

What is it then that makes didactic poetry different from other, similarly educational, poetry? Here we come to a more restricted set of parameters, which originally may have been merely descriptive of poems that follow the pattern of the *Works and Days*, the archetype of the didactic poem.[64] Whether or not these descriptive elements were considered to be prescriptive in the Hellenistic era for poets such as Aratus and Nicander is open to discussion.[65] Different scholars have come up with different sets of criteria, based on different concepts of the genre, and while different approaches seem to be valid from their own perspective, didactic poetry is ultimately a genre that defies exact boundaries. There are always didactic poems that lack one or more characteristics, while at the same time one could defend that Theognis' paraenetic work suits many elementary characteristics of the didactic genre. One approach is to distinguish didactic poetry from related genres as paradoxography, paraenesis, or periegesis, but as there are many overlaps with 'proper' didactic poetry, such distinctions merely give the impression of clarity.

In what follows I give a set of criteria that appears to be a practicable, though not exclusive, description of the genre.[66] These criteria are mainly

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62 For discussion of the didactic role fulfilled by Homer (as stated by e.g. Plato in *R.* 598e and 606e), see Dalzell 1996, 10; Toohey 1996, 6; Kim 2011, 6.

63 See Effe 1977, 10–17. For the notion of the educational value of poetry in antiquity cf. Ar. *Ra.* 1501–1503, Pl. *R.* 376e–398a, Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.124–131, *AP* 343–344; examples from Gale 2001, 2. See also Dalzell 1996, 9–10.

64 The *Theogony* takes an ambivalent place between didactic-paraenetic, such as the *Works and Days*, and narrative mythological epic, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For the problems of such distinctions see Toohey 1996, 5–7, 21.

65 For the problem of circular arguments in defining didactic poetry, describing typical didactic features of poems that were considered to be didactic poetry in the first place, see Volk 2002, 25–26.

66 The issue of didactic critera is addressed by Effe 1977, 23–26; Toohey 1996, 1–19 (summarised in Toohey 2005, 19); Dalzell 1996, 8–34; Volk 2002, 25–68; Gale 2004, xiii–xv; Kruschwitz 2005, 9–15. For the issue of modern criteria versus criteria based on ancient sources (e.g. mimetic vs. amimetic poetry) see Volk and Kruschwitz.

based on those of Effe[67] and particularly Volk, who has taken the most systematic approach in defining didactic poetry.[68] One should keep in mind, however, that the idea of didactic poetry, like any genre, is not fixed by a set of rules, but develops in the course of its reception. Our concept of didactic poetry, as shaped by for example Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, or Vergil's *Georgics* is therefore inherently different than for instance Nicander's concept of didactic poetry, simply because the reception of *De Rerum Natura* or the *Georgics*—after Nicander's time—has added to the development of the genre as we define it. Genres are not static, but defined and redefined by their own literary histories, which makes exact delineation or definition problematic.[69]

### 3.2 *Metre of Didactic Poetry*

The first criterion by which we can tell which poems can or cannot be considered didactic epic is a formal one, viz. metre.[70] Despite the obvious exceptions to the rule, this criterion, although very generic, separates didactic epic from many other categories.[71] It is certainly true that the exceptions pose problems

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67 Effe (1977, 40–79) distinguishes three types: (i) directly instructional, like Lucretius, whose primary aim is to instruct; (ii) indirectly instructional, like Aratus and Vergil: instruction is not the only important feature, but the instructive aim is genuine, with ample room for ornamentation; (iii) purely ornamental, without any sincere didactic intent, like the *Theriaca*: its main goal is to surprise the reader with display of virtuosity.

68 Volk's fruitful approach generally captures the genre from different perspectives, yet refrains from the use of metre and subject matter as relevant criteria, which I think deserve pride of place; for critique on her formal exclusion of Parmenides from the canon see Sider 2014, 16.

69 See also Fowler (2000, 205), who rightly points out that generic analysis should not aim at simply providing labels, but at constructing a "horizon of expectations for a reader against which the particular details are read".

70 I will pass over Aristotle's observation that metre is largely irrelevant as a criterion, and his remark that the simple fact the Empedocles uses metre does not make him a poet (Arist. *Poet.* 1447b13–20); his ideas are based on the concept of *mimesis*, which is different from modern concepts of poetry, and has little to do with the stylistic merits of Empedocles; see Dalzell 1996, 12–13.

71 Exceptions to the rule vary from elegiac poems such as Callimachus' *Aetia* and Ovid's *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia amoris*, and *Fasti* (which could be considered didactic poems, or at least related, from different perspectives; see Effe 1977, 234–248), to didactic poems in iambics; see Effe 1977, 184–187. Special mention should be made here of Nicander's own *Ophiaca* (fr. 31 G-S—if we are dealing with a fragment, rather than a self-contained epigram, as Deubner (1943, 22–24) suggests) and of the instructive elegiac recipes by Philo of Byzantium (*SH* 690), Eudemus (*SH* 412A), Andromachus the Elder (62 *GDRK*) and Aglaias (*SH* 18); on the latter see De Stefani 2007. Harder (2007, 25): "Because [didactic poetry]

to the use of metre as a decisive parameter, yet it is clear that poetry written in, say, choliambics, sapphic stanza's, or anapests does not qualify as didactic poetry. The dactylic hexameter can thus be considered the traditional metre in which didactic poetry is written, irreverent of the fact that the use of this metre covers a wide range of genres, such as epic, bucolic, and epyllion, next to the use of the hexameter in (early) epigram and oracles, and satires and letters in Roman literature.[72]

### 3.3 *Didactic Setting*

A second criterion consists in the presence of a single persona that plays the role of a teacher.[73] He speaks in the first person and is present throughout the poem, unlike the epic ἀοιδός who steps back after his initial appearance in the proem and seldom betrays his presence later in his work.[74] Although Homer could be considered a teacher, he does not present himself as an authoritative educator in his poetry. Moreover, although Homer's content may be authoritative from certain points of view, the poet does not present *himself* as an authority. Counterpart of the persona of the teacher is the persona of the pupil, who may be addressed by name, or consist of a generic group of beneficiaries, as for instance the farmers, sailors, wayfarers, and herdsmen in the *Phaenomena*.[75] Although there is no reason why the internal addressee should not be

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was dactylic poetry (in hexameters as well as elegiac distichs) it was treated as part of the genre of epic poetry." Even archaic elegy could be considered a form of educational—yet not didactic—poetry; interpreting the elegies of Theognis as admonitory (West 1978, 23) or instructional (Sider 2014, 18) poetry is very close to approaching the *Works and Days* as paraenetic poetry (Ford 1992, 30).

72 For the idea that the hexameter functions as a marker of relationships within its use in different genres see Gale 2004, xiii.

73 For the role of the teacher, and his counterpart, the addressed student, see Volk (2002, 37–39), who speaks of the 'teacher-student constellation'. Fakas (2001, 87–88) is right in pointing out that this does not work for Parmenides, who presents himself as the pupil, with the instructing goddess as his counterpart. This teacher-student constellation was already observed as such in antiquity, e.g. in Serv. *prooem. ad Georg*. 3, p. 129 Thilo-Hagen: *hi libri didascalici sunt unde necesse est, ut ad aliquem scribantur; nam praeceptum et doctoris et discipuli personam reguirit. unde as Maecenatem scribit, sicuti Hesiodus ad Persen, Lucretius ad Memmium*. Cf. Harder 2007, 25 n. 9.

74 For the difference between an author who occasionally apostrophises (like Homer) and a didactic poet who is in contact with his addressee all the time see Fakas 2001, 85.

75 See Effe 1977, 23; Dalzell 1996, 25–27; Fakas 2001, 100–148. Bing (1993, 100) is right to point out that the particular address of farmers and sailors is an exaggeration. Neither are they

able to respond and act as an embedded ('secondary') first-person narrator, this is not a characteristic of didactic poetry, obviously due to the example set by the *Works and Days*, which lacks this kind of dramatic setting.[76]

The presence of an *internal* addressee does not exclude the relevance of an *external* addressee, neither need the internal addressee be limited to a single entity.[77] It is not necessary for the addressee to exist outside of the text, as long as the credibility of the didactic setting is maintained, for example through the teacher's use of imperative phrases directed at the addressee. While the recognition of the role of the pupil thus seems to be a mere formality, its presence constitutes a dramatic setting characteristic of didactic poetry.[78]

### 3.4 *Subject Matter*

A third criterion applies to the subject matter. Although arguably anything can be made subject of a didactic poem, most topics derive from distinct disciplines or branches of learning.[79] In addition there is a clear distinction between didactic poems with single (or sometimes double) topics of learning, expressed in a few words ('star signs and weather signs'), and non-didactic poems in which many different potential elements of learning are scattered and concisely explained, yet never given full treatment, as is the case in Homer.[80] A

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the only ones addressed, nor are they addressed particularly frequently; cf. Hutchinson 1988, 224 n. 17.

76 See Strauss Clay 1993, 23–24. A notable and innovative exception to this is of course the dialogical framework of the first two books of Callimachus' *Aetia*, where the didactic mode of instruction is turned into a Q & A session, dramatising the standard monologue form as used by Hesiod.

77 Cf. the role of the kings in the *Works and Days*, who act collectively as a secondary internal addressee; Schmidt 1986, 29–34. The multiplicity of addressees is characteristic of Empedocles as well, who differentiates between his addresses to Pausanias, a general audience in the second person plural, and Calliope as his personal Muse; Obbink 1993, 58.

78 For the idea of the addressee as a mere foil, a 'dummy figure', see Volk 2002, 38.

79 Didactic poems with apparently mock-serious subjects, such as Archestratus' *Hedypatheia*, can be considered parody, rather than genuinely didactic (see Effe 1977, 234–237 and Toohey 1996, 3). It is, however, difficult to assess whether Archestratus is to be considered proper parody, or rather light poetic amusement based on genuine interest on the poet's part.

80 One could argue that e.g. the *Iliad* presents its single topic (viz. μῆνιν) in the same way as Aratus does, but this is of course the poet's theme, not the subject of its *didactic* content. Limitation in didactic scope is also evident in other epics, e.g. an extensive passage on herpetology in Lucan does not make the ninth book of the *Pharsalia* a didactic poem. The

typical aspect is, moreover, that subjects are treated integrally and extensively: the poem is not finished before the entire subject has been treated in some detail.[81]

In addition one needs to distinguish between poetry with and poetry without a narrative plot. It is clear that a subject like 'the capture of Troy' belongs to epic narrative, and is not a suitable subject for a didactic poem. The distinctive criterion here is the presence (as in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*) or absence (as in the *Phaenomena*) of a plot around which the narrative revolves.[82]

### 3.5 (*Pseudo-*)*Instruction*

A fourth criterion lies in the element of instruction, or at least the semblance of instruction, which perhaps can be labelled 'pseudo-instruction'. The poet, performing within his role as a teacher, does not merely give a catalogue of phenomena,[83] but explicitly (sometimes implicitly) tells his addressee to *act* upon the knowledge imparted. This certainly applies to Perses in the *Works and Days*, and surely to Hermesianax in the *Theriaca*, and Protagoras in the *Alexipharmaca*. But even in the *Phaenomena* we get the impression that the addressee is encouraged to put the acquired knowledge to use, turning the information to his advantage in sailing or farming.[84] Although such an instructive element can less readily be applied to the philosophical poems of Parmenides and Empedocles, we get the impression that the addressee is not merely told how

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criterion of the single topic, treated extensively and integrally, excludes other paraenetic or hortatory 'didactic' poetry such as e.g. the instructions to Cyrnus in the *Theognidea*.

81 Effe 1977, 22–23.

82 Narrative plots can of course exist within didactic poems, but only within digressions, e.g. the lengthy episode of Aristaeus, Orpheus and Euridice in the fourth book of Vergil's *Georgics*. This Orpheus-narrative is typically considered an epyllion within a didactic poem, not part of the poem's didactic contents.

83 As in e.g. Hesiod's *Theogony*, Callimachus' *Aetia*, Dionysius' *Periegesis*, or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Whether one should consider this category didactic or not ('informative didactic'? 'narrative didactic'?) is a matter of debate. Harder (2007, 26), following Kenney (2003), argues for a broader generic approach that "may include all poetry which presents an abstract body of knowledge instead of a mimetic plot from the lives of specific characters". This yields a distinction between instructive (e.g. *Works and Days*) and informative (e.g. the *Aetia*) didactic poetry (next, of course, to narrative epic); Harder 2007, 26–27. Although Harder's broad classification is a sensible one, her inclusion of Lycophron's *Alexandra* (which in a sense is also poetry in the didactic mode) in the didactic corpus discords with other relevant criteria.

84 For the characteristic element of practical instruction cf. the *Halieutica* of Ovid and that of Oppian and the *Cynegetica* of ps.-Oppian and Nemesianus.

the universe works, but to actively change his attitude towards that world.[85] Whether or not the poet expects the addressee to actually carry out these instructions, or merely uses the concept as a literary motif (thus engaging in pseudo-instruction) is irrelevant to the poetry itself.[86]

### 3.6 *Explicit Didactic Intent*

A fifth criterion is based on Volk's observation of the *explicit didactic intent* of the persona of the teacher within a didactic poem. "A didactic poem either states clearly, or gives other strong indications, that it is first and foremost supposed to teach whatever subject or skill it happens to be treating."[87] There are different ways to achieve this. The poet can use evident lexical markers (for example the use of ἐγώ combined with a subject matter and a verb expressing a mode of teaching), he can underline the didactic setting by repeatedly addressing the addressee, or he can point at the expertise offered by the poet's persona of the teacher.[88] This 'explicit didactic intent' is reflected in a clear presentation of the subject matter, in which the teacher pays attention to an orderly division of the material.[89] Even in the *Works and Days*, which is the least methodologically structured poem of the genre, we find a distinct partition in sections on maintenance of equipment, observation of rules, the best time of year, proper

85 E.g. the Empedoclean notion of reincarnation is followed by instructions to abstain from meat and sacrifice of animals. The idea of a 'practical' ethical poem certainly applies to Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. Whether Nicander considered Parmenides to be foremost a philosopher or a poet is, however, difficult to assess.

86 Although the criterion of instruction appears to be relevant, it is not unproblematic, particularly when applied to the *Theogony*, which lacks any such instruction. The easy solution is to qualify the latter as epic narrative or catalogue poetry, but the fact remains that not all didactic epic contains this element of instruction. Cf. Dionysius Periegetes' *Oikoumenes Periegesis*, which is neither instructive, nor can it be labelled epic narrative. Similar problems are posed by the fragmentary geographical poem of ps.-Scymnus.

87 Volk 2002, 36–37. This criterion disqualifies several poems that bear close resemblance to the genre of didactic poetry, such as Parmenides' *Peri Physeos*, Horace's *Ars Poetica* (which presents itself as a letter) and Ovid's *Fasti* (clear intention of singing, not teaching, no clear address of any pupil, and moreover, in elegiacs); see Volk 42. Parmenides is problematic because the role played by the teacher (c.q. the goddess) does not coincide with the poem's narrator, c.q. 'Parmenides'. This leaves us with a reversed didactic setting, untypical of didactic poetry in the Hesiodic vein; see Volk 49–50.

88 Good examples are Hes. *Op*. 10, Nic. *Ther*. 1–4, 494–496, Opp. *H*. 1.1–9.

89 See Effe (1977, 22) who characterises a didactic poem as "einer Form 'direkter lehrhafter Dichtung', in welcher das Didaktische am unverhülltesten, intensivsten und systematischsten in den Vordergrund tritt."

behaviour and so on in order to facilitate digestion by the pupil. Later didactic poets work even more systematically, mapping out their material in a straightforward manner. The idea of (an attempt at) presenting a systematic account is thus quintessential to the genre.[90]

### 3.7 *Poetic Self-Consciousness*

An interesting sixth criterion as introduced by Volk is the *poetic self-consciousness* displayed in didactic poetry.[91] In comparison to narrative epic, which is considered to be poetical *per se* and does not need to stress this status, didactic poetry makes a marked effort to underline its poetic value, focusing on elements it shares with its narrative relative.[92] In self-consciously styling themselves as poets, didactic authors provided proems playing on the tradition of invocation, emphasis on the role of the teacher *qua* poet, and elaborate poetic diction through which the close relation to 'proper' epic, viz. epic narrative, is marked.[93]

### 3.8 *Poetic Simultaneity*

A final criterion, again as observed by Volk, is *poetic simultaneity*. Though not an element exclusive to didactic poetry, it is a marked feature applicable to every single didactic poem transmitted. The teaching itself is the act performed through the performance of the poem. The teaching is not part of the poem, or its key element, but as the poet unrolls his lines, the lessons they contain are taught simultaneously. Moreover, this process is repeatedly expressed by the teacher-poet, who tells his internal addressee "having sung of *x*, I shall now tell you of *y*".[94] This criterion, although useful for the study of didactic poetry, is in fact applicable to most poetry that is presented orally or purports to do so. As such, poetic simultaneity is a form of *mimesis* of performance, be it the

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90 See Dalzell 1996, 8–9.

91 For further discussion of the concept see Effe 1977, 21 with n. 32; Volk 2002, 1–24 and 39.

92 As Volk admits, this criterion does not work so well for the *Works and Days*, which for the largest part lacks any confirmation of its poetic status within its frame of unpoetic teachings. The rare exceptions—Hesiod does call himself a poet, and incorporates an address to the Muses—are, however limited, sufficient as expressions of poetic self-conscienceness. The same can be said about Nicander's use of Ὁμήρειος in *Ther*. 957, and ὑμνοπόλος (*Al.* 629), both limited but convincing poetically self-conscient utterances; Volk 2002, 39 and 46.

93 This criterion of self-representation, as shared by the *Works and Days* and the *Theogony* shows the latter to be close to didactic poetry.

94 Volk 2002, 40.

teaching of didactic lessons, the telling of stories, or the singing of songs. In each case utterances relating to the progress of the poem thus simultaneously refer to the progress of expounding the subject matter.[95]

### 3.9 *Didactic Poetry versus Didactic Prose*

In order to establish the position of didactic poetry within the literature of knowledge in general, didactic poetry can be considered to constitute a particular type of learning, next to technical prose. Such an elementary division helps to point out the differences between the two, but also adds to the awareness of the development from Hesiod to an age in which prose had become the norm for technical writings. It is interesting to pinpoint in what respect didactic poetry differs from didactic prose in the later period.[96] Of course we need to make a clear distinction between Hesiod's age, in which, due to the lack of an established prose tradition, there was no choice between poetry or prose, and the Hellenistic era, in which the choice between poetry and prose was a conscious one. For Hesiod the use of verse was *per se* not based on literary grounds, as it was for Nicander.[97]

Gibson brings up the case of Columella.[98] The first-century CE Roman author and expert wrote the tenth book of his *De re rustica* (twelve books) in hexameters, which shows that the choice between prose and poetry is a deliberate one.[99] Unfortunately, little research has been done so far on the differences

95 The use of future tenses in didactic poetry ('I will tell you …'), apparently infringing on this simultaneity, could therefore be considered a variant of the so-called performative future; see Faraone 1995, 1–15, although his approach has been refuted convincingly by Pfeijffer 1999b. In Nic. it is evident that the use of the future often refers to the moment all but instantly following after the utterance. As such it corroborates the simultaneity of poem, lesson, and performance.

96 For the generic distinctions between didactic poetry and didactic prose, which I will not go into here, see Hutchinson 2009 and Sider 2014, 14 with n. 6.

97 It is interesting that many Alexandrian scholarly poets, now primarily known for their poetry, wrote in prose as well, e.g. Callimachus, whose vast prose output appears to have exceeded the quantity of his poetry by far. Comparison is, however, all but impossible, as virtually all prose treatises produced in Hellenistic scholarly circles are now lost.

98 Gibson 1998, 67.

99 Cf. Fowler (2000, 205), "In addition, didactic poetry has to be in verse. This may seem an excessively obvious point to make, but didactic poetry is, in fact, unusual in having for much of its history a factual prose genre or genres, technical or isagogic literature, existing alongside it with analogous primary elements of teacher, pupil, and matter." The reasons for the deliberate choice for poetry instead of prose would be particularly interesting in the case of Xenophanes, Parmenides and Empedocles. Not only do these early philosophers

between the two.[100] Gibson's own linguistic observations yield interesting differences in the use of imperatives and directives, ostensibly pointing out the formal character of scientific prose, as opposed to the popular form of didactic poetry.[101] Future research will hopefully shed new light on the distinctions between the two.

### 3.10 *Didactic Poetry as an Archaic Literary Genre*

In order to assess the emulations of later didactic poets, the status of early didactic poetry needs to be determined. As follows from the previous sections this is problematic, as the only proper example extant is the *Works and Days*.[102] In addition, it is impossible to tell whether the *Works and Days* is a typical product of the genre, or a highly successful exception to a genre consisting of short didactic pieces, dissimilar in length to the scale of the *Works and Days*, and the aspirations from which it resulted.[103] Yet the influence of the *Works and Days* is evident to such an extent in Alexandrian didactic poetry, that we may tentatively assume that at least the Hellenistic poets assumed Hesiod to be the zenith of early didactic poetry. Consequently, the following sections will deal with the *Works and Days* only.

Although Hesiod's *Works and Days* is our oldest example of a didactic poem, it did not come into existence out of nowhere, nor can Hesiod be credited with the invention of an entirely new literary genre. As has been shown, Hesiod is to be considered the end of an oral tradition of wisdom poetry, rather than its initiator, irreverent of his status in later centuries.[104] These origins are reflected in the patchwork nature of the *Works and Days*, consisting of invocation, *paraenesis*, narrative myth, fable, gnomes, religious observations, agri-

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seem to have written in prose (Toohey 1996, 34), but Empedocles in particular is said to have been an orator, and, moreover, the teacher of Gorgias; Toohey 1996, 41. Comparable to Columella is the *Opus agriculturae* (or *De re rustica*) of the fourth-century CE writer Palladius, who wrote the last, fourteenth, book (*De insitione*, 'on grafting') of his work on agriculture in elegiacs, presumably in imitation of Columella; see Effe 1977, 103–106 and Formisano 2005, 295–310.

100 Kruschwitz 2005, 13 n. 12.

101 Gibson 1998.

102 I.e. excluding elegiac paraenetic (Solon, Theognis) and narrative epic (*Theogony*).

103 Of course 'genre' here has a different meaning than in Nicander's time, as for Hesiod writing didactic was less of a choice than for Hellenistic authors, who could choose between prose and poetry.

104 For an overview of pre-Hesiodic wisdom literature, originating in the Near East, see Walcot 1966, 80–103; West 1978, 3–15, 25–30; Barron & Easterling 1989a, 60; West 1997, 306–333. Hesiod's work is, however, different in certain respects. See Schmidt 1986, 17–19.

cultural instructions and the like. Despite this diversity the poem constitutes a single work, not just a randomly collected list of separate elements.[105] In joining all such different elements together in a harmonious manner, the poet thus shows awareness of the value of literary composition.[106] Thematic unity is created through the address of Hesiod's brother Perses, who acts as the object of the poet's bitter lessons. Whether Perses is to be considered a real or a fictitious person, representing a general audience, remains unclear.[107] The pre-Hesiodic non-Greek didactic tradition knows of didactic poetry in which fathers typically instruct sons; Hesiod's setting (a brother instructing his brother) may have been his own invention.[108] What is clear throughout is the personal tone of the poem, and the relevance of Hesiod's persona as participant in his poem (as an internal narrator), showing a marked contrast with Homer. Diverse as the multifarious elements of the poem may be, they all serve to show the addressee how to act properly and lead his life in a wise and decent manner.

Next to thematic unity formal characteristics of the *Works and Days* are to be taken into consideration. Here we find that Hesiod, despite the fact that gods and heroes are largely absent from the *Works and Days*, is stylistically relatively close to Homer. This does not only apply to the use of dactylic hexameters, but also to the use of lofty Homeric diction, comprising the highly artificial *Kunstsprache*, the varied and colourful vocabulary associated with heroic epic, and the frequent use of formulaic lines.[109] Hesiod's language, coupled with the appeal for inspiration in the proem of the poem show the status of the author as an epic poet.[110] He may be teaching us in detail about tilling the field, but there is little indication that Hesiod was a farmer himself. In fact Hesiod himself states in the section on sailing (*Op.* 618–693) that he has no expertise at all in these matters, but nevertheless can tell us all about it, because

105 See Toohey 1996, 20; for the internal cohesion of the *Works and Days* see Lardinois 1998.

106 This does of course not imply that the *Works and Days* was composed in written form; see Barron & Easterling 1989a, 51–52.

107 See West 1978, 33–40; Schmidt 1986, 19–21; Strauss Clay 1993, 23–33.

108 Barron 1989a, 60. It is interesting that the *Precepts of Chiron* (fr. 283–285 MW), attributed to Hesiod, show another interesting turn on the Near-Eastern father-son pattern of instruction, viz. that of Chiron as guardian and Achilles as foster son.

109 According to Rowe approximately a fourth of Hesiod's output (i.e. not just the *Works and Days*) consists of repetitions of phrases and lines; Rowe 1978, 6. The stylistic similarities between Hesiod and Homer should of course not detract from their significant differences in e.g. vocabulary, dialect, or metre (see West 1966, 77–79, 80, and 91–101).

110 "Didactic, or 'teaching' epic, in so far as it was credited with a separate existence, was considered to be part and parcel of the genre of epic", Toohey 1996, 6.

the Muses have taught him.[111] This observation, viz. that Hesiod is foremost a poet, as this is the role the Muses have apportioned him, is important as it prefigures the detachment of later poets to their material. He may appear as a farmer, as the Muses give him the ability to present himself as a knowledgeable person; he may even appear as someone participating in the real life of ordinary peasants.[112] But Hesiod is not a farmer sharing his personal experience with his brother, but a poet combining *paraenesis* aimed at the addressee with a dramatic depiction of the life of a farmer.[113]

Although differing with regard to both formal and internal characteristics, in the archaic period the genre of paraenetic elegy bears close resemblance to that of didactic poetry. Here we think primarily of the *Theognidea*, as it is not only our largest example, but also its most characteristic. Particularly due to the continuous presence of the addressee Cyrnus a dramatic setting is established that is very similar to that of the *Works and Days*. Although little remains otherwise from the archaic period, the nature of the paraenetic genre can be grasped from some of the fragments of Hesiod, other than his catalogue poetry. From the *Precepts of Chiron*, a paraenetic work in which the Centaur addresses his foster son Achilles, we gather that its instructional setting must have been close to didactic poetry, despite its lack of a credible setting in the real world.[114]

Another formal characteristic of the *Works and Days* is its size.[115] Whether or not its length of 828 lines, constituting a single book, was considered average for a didactic instructive poem in Hesiod's time, what is relevant is that later didactic poets seem to have considered this size to be typical, as is reflected by the length of their works.[116] In terms of structure it is relevant that the poem

111 Cf. οὔτέ τι ναυτιλίης σεσοφισμένος οὔτέ τι νηῶν (*Op.* 649); … ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο· | Μοῦσαι γάρ μ' ἐδίδαξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον ἀείδειν (*Op.* 661–662).

112 Hesiod's self-presentation in the role of a shepherd (*Th.* 22–23) likewise adds to his credibility, as a shepherd is conventionally more likely to have an encounter with the Muses; see West 1966, 159–160.

113 For this plausible interpretation of the *Works and Days* see Nelson 1996.

114 Hes. fr. 283–285 MW.

115 The proper length of the *Works and Days* is of course determined by possible interpolations, and the question of the authenticity of the end of the poem; see West 1978, 346–347 and 364–365, and Toohey 1996, 3 and 23.

116 Considering the average size of the poems of Parmenides, Empedocles, Aratus' *Phaenomena*, and Nicander's *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*; see Toohey 1996, 22. Although these poets seem to have had the length of the *Works and Days* in mind, this does not hold true for their other works, notably Nicander's *Georgica*, which consisted of at least two

came to be known as the *Works and Days*. Although this title is probably not original, and does not even give a fair résumé of the poem's contents, later tradition may have considered the poem to consist of two parts, viz. the ἔργα and the ἡμέραι.[117]

Within the 'patchwork' of Hesiod's lessons a fair amount of space is assigned to narrative, particularly myth.[118] These myths do not seem to take a formal position within the poem, but serve to illustrate some of the teacher's lessons, and are brought up when the situation asks for them. Yet this too can be considered a prototypical characteristic of the genre, imitated in many later didactic poems.[119] In its use of myth, the *Works and Days* reveals its closeness to (and derivation from) heroic epic narrative, which was mythological throughout. Although mythology does not play a pervasive role in early didactic, it is clearly not merely ornamental, nor do excursions or digressions serve to give the audience a break from what would otherwise be a tiresome catalogue.

### 3.11 *Didactic Poetry as a Hellenistic Literary Genre*

The previous paragraph succinctly dealt with didactic poetry as an archaic literary genre. In this paragraph the position of didactic poetry in a very different age is examined, in order to tell the differences and similarities between the products of didactic poets in different stages of development of the genre.[120]

Although Hesiod may not have been the inventor of the genre of didactic poetry, the Hellenistic poets at least considered him to be so. Yet one poet does not constitute a new tradition, and it is only in the Hellenistic age that in retrospect a clear development can be signalled. According to Effe, this is to be attributed to Aratus, who is the first to write didactic poetry as a specific, independent genre. Whereas Empedocles and Parmenides followed Hesiod as authors of a particular branch of epic, without, however, clearly imitating the principles of the *Works and Days*, it is Aratus who displays the kind of awareness of didactic poetry as a genre that can be defined in a more restricted sense.[121]

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books. Later tradition seems to have favoured multi-book poems, e.g. Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Manilius, the two Oppians, and Nemesianus.

117 West 1978, 136.

118 *Op*. 42–105 deal with Prometheus and Pandora, 106–201 tell the myth of the Five Ages of man; 202–212 tell the fable of the hawk and the nightingale.

119 Toohey 1996, 3 and 23. The idea that such narrative elements 'represent … almost an ontological part of didactic … epic' seems, however, too strong.

120 A model of the chronological stylistic development of the genre, divided into six levels, is given by Toohey 1996, 7–13.

121 Effe 2005, 30–31; cf. Effe 1977, 23ff.

It is this literary awareness that separates him and Nicander from Empedocles and Parmenides, who clearly wrote in the epic tradition, but less evidently in a Hesiodic-didactic vein. The result is a "bewußten literarischen Akt der Neukonstitution alter, inzwischen überholter Lehrdichtung."[122] In comparison with his predecessors Aratus' innovation (or renovation) is based on two fundamental differences: the strong development of prose in the late classical and early Hellenistic age, and the poem's contents, which are no longer a reflection of the knowledge the author received from the Muse.

In terms of literary development, the Alexandrian age turned out to be a watershed in several respects, yet one of the important distinctions between early and Hellenistic didactic poetry is found earlier in history. This is related to the widespread use of prose as a common way of imparting, transmitting, or simply recording knowledge.[123] This is of course true for historiography in the classical period, as well as the genre of the philosophical dialogue, but it is particularly relevant when it comes to scholarly writings. The fourth century BCE had shown, through the technical writings of Aristotle and Theophrastus, that prose, not poetry, was the standard for science. Moreover, because of the standards set in the classical period, virtually all of the later writings dealing with technical matters, like mathematics, music, or medicine, are written in prose. Unlike their compeers in the Archaic age, authors now had a serious alternative to poetry as a means of communication.[124] It is therefore all the more remarkable that the third and second century BCE produced such unlikely hybrids of science and poetry as the works of Aratus and Nicander. To present these authors as experts who simply preferred to convey their learning in poetry instead of prose is therefore erroneous. Had they verily been experts themselves they would undoubtedly have written in prose.[125] But since they considered themselves poets in the first place, concerning themselves with literary tradition, their works, although ostensibly of a technical nature, were bound to be in verse from the start.[126]

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122 Effe 2005, 31.

123 See Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 227–228.

124 Effe 2005, 31.

125 Contra Jacques (2002, xx), who considers Nicander's choice for composing in verse to be of a mnemotechnical nature. The argument is obviously borrowed from the concept of oral performance, but in many respects it is inapt for Nicander's poetry, characterised by a virtual lack of repetition, a high degree of lexical complexity, and a context devoid of mnemotechnically trained bards. Cf. Touwaide 1991, 68.

126 This of course does not rule out that Aratus or Nicander wrote prose, but their prose works are more likely to reflect their other literary output, e.g. Nicander's *On the poets*

The Alexandrian era had brought about a new look on the literary past, and had subsequently developed new ideals in terms of poetical aesthetics.[127] Although many differences between different poets can be pointed out, much of the poetry that has come to us is characterised by a high degree of learnedness, artificiality, novelty, and a complex combination of detachment and connection to the celebrated poetry of the past. This was made possible first of all because of the development of book production, which allowed for a much wider dissemination of poetry, and in particular because of the institutionalisation of learning in the royal libraries of the Hellenistic rulers. This brought about a culture of literary scrutiny, in which all kinds of dialects, rarities, oddities and particularities were studied and pored over. It resulted in a markedly different stance towards poetical production. Whereas Hesiod, being part of an oral culture, loosely followed a tradition of practical wisdom without imitating a fixed text of his predecessors, the Alexandrians studied Hesiod's writings word by word. The result is a didactic poetry of an entirely different nature. The spontaneity of Hesiod's lines has been replaced with a highly artificial imitation of many of the particularities of the *Works and Days*: the didactic setting, the role of myth, the epic diction, the approximate length of the poem, and so on. It is this artificiality, reflected in the pseudo-practicality of the poems' contents, that has given Hellenistic didactic the qualification of art for art's sake.[128] This is partly due to the fact that these poems rely in form on the template of the *Works and Days*, but take their contents from learned external sources, viz. prose treatises produced by experts.[129] To be fair, it should be stated that Hesiod does not seem to be a very reliable source either, as his information is often inaccurate and incomplete. Yet he never shows the kind of artificial detachment found in his Hellenistic counterparts. As such, the *Works and Days* is not simply a virtuoso piece, and therefore different from the *Phaenomena*, the *Theriaca*, or the *Alexipharmaca*.

To what degree Hellenistic didactic poets relied on prose sources is difficult to assess, due to the fact that their sources are all but lost. In both the cases of Aratus and Nicander the dependence on one (Eudoxus and Apollodorus

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*of Colophon* and *Glossai*, if these works were written in prose. The prose paraphrase of Eutecnius (fourth century CE), although written much later, in fact shows that the *Theriaca* is unsuitable for proper didactic transmission, because of its metrical limitations and its lexicon, both of which were eliminated in the process by Eutecnius.

127 See e.g. Bing 1988, 50–90.

128 Volk 2002, 55.

129 Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 224–245.

respectively), or more prose sources seems evident.[130] Whether or not both poets had a thing or two to add themselves is a subject of debate. We can, however, be sure that prose sources played an important role in both cases.[131] The poets thus indulged in poetic metaphrasis, whether in a servile or in a less inhibited manner. In either way, they differed widely from Hesiod's approach.

Apart from the learnedness of Hellenistic didactic, its artificiality also lies within the dramatic framework. Whereas Hesiod's didactic setting does not give the impression it has been fully thought through in advance—as can be observed in the somewhat awkward shift of address from Perses to the kings—the Hellenistic poets can set the stage upfront, carefully deciding whom they will address and why. Even the persona of the didactic teacher can be carefully constructed or manipulated to convey the exact image the poet wants to give of himself. The result of this is, however, not a construction in which both teacher and pupil come to the fore very clearly. Both in the case of Aratus and Nicander the persona of the teacher remains rather vague. We learn virtually nothing about their personas' lives, environments, or the cause or source of their particular knowledge. Although they are present throughout the poem, their presence is an inconspicuous one, and their characters are unobtrusive. This does not mean that the dramatic-didactic setting is irrelevant to Aratus' or Nicander's poetry. It only shows that their dramatic play is very sophisticated; its importance lies in their provision of the framework. The didactic setting is essentially a (pseudo-) dramatic addition of the versifier who creates a framework for his material: versification of learned prose and dramatic presentation thus separate the poet engaged in *metaphrasis* from his prose source.[132] This artificial dramatic framework, reminiscent of Hesiod, is coupled with the equally artificial application of 'epic technique'.[133] This qualification covers a wide range of elements borrowed from both Hesiod and Homer, including epic diction in general, the use of dialect forms, archaisms, neologisms based on epic diction, and epithets.

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130 For Eudoxus as Aratus' source see Kidd 1997, 14–18; for Apollodorus as Nicander's source see n. 23 in section 2.3.

131 The relevance of prose sources is already clear in the fourth century BCE proto-Hellenistic poet Archestratus. Although the latter is not a metaphrast to any extent, in his use (or at least awareness of) prose sources he differs widely from Hesiod, who was part of an oral culture; see Olson & Sens 2000, xxxviii–xxxix.

132 Schneider 1962, 9.

133 Schneider 1962, 16.

The assessment of other Hellenistic didactic poetry is hampered by transmission.[134] We know of Numenius, who produced a *Halieuticon* and a *Theriacon*.[135] Another poem on fishing, Θαλάσσια Ἔργα (perhaps alternatively known as *Halieutica*), was written by Pancrates, but again very little survives.[136] Of the poems *Halieutica* of Caecalus(?) of Argos and Posidonius of Corinth we know even less, as is the case with the *Cynegetica* of Sostratus.[137] Of many other possible titles it is impossible to judge whether they were of a didactic nature. The fragments of Nicander's own *Georgica* (originally at least two books; some 140 lines are preserved) are written in the same vein as his extant works, the *Melissurgica* (on apiculture) is little more than a title to us.

### 3.12 *Catalogue Poetry*

When stripped of its dramatic framing the *Theriaca*, like the *Alexipharmaca* and Aratus' *Phaenomena*, can be characterised as a catalogue. Some items are given more space than others, while other items are merely mentioned, but throughout the reader perceives these poems essentially as long lists. This perception is maintained by relative brevity (the reader is not distracted so long that he forgets that he is listening to a list), similarity (the reader instantly recognises that a new item is presented), and simplicity (the reader is not distracted by extensive narrative).[138]

As a literary device the catalogue is an interesting one.[139] It is generally recognised as a component of epic, in which it plays a modest, but characteristic role.[140] Next to the embedded catalogues as found in the *Iliad*, and those in the *Works and Days*, it can make up a 'genre' of its own, for which

134 See, however, Sider 2014, 28–29 for an overview of dozens of didactic poems produced in the Hellenistic era alone.

135 Some forty lines of the *Halieuticon* have been preserved; see *SH* 568–588. Of the *Theriacon* not even five complete lines survive; see *SH* 589–594.

136 Seven incomplete lines; see *SH* 598–601.

137 *SH* 237, 709, and 735. Caecalus and Posidonius are mentioned by Athenaeus. The *Cynegetica* is said to have comprised two books.

138 For the relevance of the catalogue form for didactic poetry see Fakas 2001, 77.

139 For a study of the catalogue as a literary form in Greek and Latin epic, see Kühlmann 1973. For an overview of studies on catalogues in classical literature see Lausberg 1990, 188 n. 71.

140 E.g. the catalogue of ships in *Il.* 2.484–877, the descendents of Glaucus in *Il.* 6.151–211, the Nereids in *Il.* 18.39–49, the sons of Priam in *Il.* 24.247–263, the catalogue of Argonauts in A.R. 1.23–233. The catalogue element proved to be fruitful in Latin poetry as well, e.g. in elegy, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*, and in epic; see Reitz 1999, 334–336.

Hesiod's *Ehoiai* or *Catalogue of Women* stood model.[141] Interestingly, the catalogue became so much considered to be a Hesiodic feature that Aristarchus deemed the catalogues in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to be 'unhomeric', as they had a Ἡσιόδειος χαρακτήρ.[142] This sort of catalogue poetry found many followers in the (proto-)Hellenistic age.[143] These are essentially narrative poems ostensibly based on the Hesiodic example of the *Catalogue of Women*. Although the catalogue appears to have had an oral origin, it became a stock element in later poetry that lacked such an origin.[144]

Again Hesiod can be credited with the two earliest examples of extensive catalogue poems, the *Theogony* and the *Catalogue of Women*.[145] As such, he is the propagator of both the genre of the catalogue and the didactic poem. As much as the *Theriaca* is a didactic poem, Nicander must have been aware of the parallel tradition of catalogue poetry, particularly in the (proto-)Hellenistic age. It is therefore not unlikely that he considered himself to be following this line of literary tradition as well. Catalogue poetry and didactic instruction in a narrower sense blend easily within the genre of didactic poetry. Moreover, before Nicander catalogue-like didactic poetry, such as Aratus' *Phaenomena*, added to

141 The influence of Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* on Hellenistic poetry is discussed by Hunter 2005. An interesting variant of an early catalogue poem in iambics is Semon. 7 *IEG*². For catalogues within catalogues cf. the catalogue of Nereids in Hes. *Th.* 233–264 within the larger catalogue of the *Theogony*. Similar layers are found in e.g. Nic. *Ther.* 934–956 (a catalogue of ingredients within a catalogue of recipes). Ovid plays the same game in *Met.* 3.206–255, where Actaeon's dogs form a catalogue within the grand catalogue of metamorphoses that make up the poem.

142 See Pfeiffer 1968, 220.

143 Cf. the *Bittis* of Philitas (Spanoudakis 2002), the *Apollo* of Alexander of Aetolia (Magnelli 1999), the *Lyde* of Antimachus (Matthews 1996), the *Leontion* of Hermesianax (*CA* 7, p. 98 = 3 Lightfoot), the *Catalogue of Women* of Nicaenetus (*CA* 2, p. 2; title only), the *Ehoioi* of Sostratus (or Sosicrates?) (*SH* 732; title only), the *Erotes or Beautiful Boys* of Phanocles (*CA* 13, p. 106), the fragmentary elegy of *P.Oxy.* 3723 (*SSH* 1187), and, arguably, the *Aetia* of Callimachus. Although not all of these poems were conceived primarily as 'catalogue poetry' (the *Lyde*, *Apollo*, and the *Leontion* are formally narrative elegy), they do portray an approach that is suggestive of catalogue poetry, e.g. the consecutive treatment of sixteen mini-biographies in the only 98 lines extant of Hermesianax' *Leontion*; for the assessment of Alexander Aetolus' *Apollo* as a catalogue poem see Magnelli 1999, 16–23. The catalogue of dainties of which Archestratus' *Hedypatheia* is largely made up, though of a different nature, shows the same predilection; fragments in Olson & Sens 2000.

144 See Hunter 2000, 67: "Passages such as Apollonius' 'Catalogue of Argonauts' clearly exploit the tension between an oral form *par excellence* and the inevitability of written reception."

145 Cf. Fakas 2001, 77 n. 48.

a sense that both strains are closely connected, a connection that is corroborated by Nicander, who in turn helps to define the genre in its development. In this light Nicander's choice for the verb κατέλεξε (cognate to καταλόγος) in *Ther.* 12 is interesting, as it is used here for catalogue poetry composed by Hesiod. It seems Nicander thus shows his awareness of Hesiod as a writer of catalogue poetry.[146]

### 3.13 *Conclusion*

As we have seen the *Theriaca* fits the genre of didactic poetry well. It picks up on all of its characteristics, and thus firmly places itself in the tradition established by Hesiod, and continued in the Alexandrian era by Aratus. As such the *Theriaca* is evidently not a mere versified prose treatise that uses hexameters to present its contents. Important preconditions such as explicit didactic intent, poetic self-consciousness, didactic setting and poetic simultaneity are met, which results in a presentation that is decidedly poetic. The poet thus shows his awareness of the distinct literary tradition in which he wants to partake. The result is therefore too obviously part of this tradition to suggest that the poet's versification is superficial, or a mere layer over a core of technical content. Nicander's thorough sense of the tradition of didactic poetry betrays his true colours: that of a poet rather than a doctor.

## 4 Narratological Aspects

As we have seen, the dramatic framing of the subject matter is an essential feature of didactic poetry, and as such a feature Nicander chose to follow. Such poetry also calls for specific narratological elements that allow the reader to determine what kind of text he has before him. The conventions of didactic poetry as a genre are characterised by certain narrative roles, which will be examined next. Nicander's adherence to this model shows again that his writings are not primarily motivated by their content, but by a sense of the conventions of the genre of didactic poetry. These narratological elements contribute to Nicander's self-presentation as a poet, instead of as a doctor or a pharmacist.

### 4.1 *Historical Author, Ideal Author, Teacher*

In order to make a proper assessment of the poet's narratological *modus operandi* we need to distinguish between four different layers in which author and

146 Effe (1974, 119 n. 2) suggests the reference is to the *Catalogue of Women* in particular.

audience can 'exist': (i) the historical flesh-and-blood author of the poem, writing for a historical audience; (ii) the 'ideal' author, that is the learned poet, writing for a learned audience of *literati*. Within the poem this is a different voice than (iii) the didactic persona, the first person teacher who addresses his pupil(s) within the poem's didactic setting.[147] (iv) An external narrator unexpectedly turns up in the last two lines of the poem, who refers to the historical author Nicander, but who cannot automatically be identified by him. These four layers will be explained below.

The first layer consists of the historical 'real' author, writing for an intended or uninteded 'real' audience, which may be contemporary, even present, but which can also exist in the future (for instance modern readers).[148] Stating the obvious, the real author is—as far as is historically traceable—Nicander of Colophon, or at least one of the Nicanders dealt with above (1.4). This 4author does not exist within the text itself, and from a narratological point of view there is no reason to assume that this Nicander was a doctor simply because he wrote about medical issues, a supposition that is based on the confusion between the historical author of the first layer, and the role assumed by the poet in the third layer (see below).

In the second layer we find the abstract 'ideal' author present within the text.[149] He is the one who presents us with intertextual allusions, verbal play, the acrostic, etymology and aetiology for the sake of aesthetics, or sophisticated play with presentations of romantic-bucolic scenery in earlier poetry. On the same level we find a corresponding reader who 'gets' the artful play contained in the *Theriaca*, and who can see beyond the poem's apparent contents of snakes and herbs. He is what could be called the 'ideal' reader, the able reader who is capable of reconstructing the hidden literary message of the ideal author. This external addressee will be addressed more fully in 4.4.

In the third layer we then find the intratextual fictitious didactic narrator who addresses his internal addressee(s) using verbs in the first person. This

147 Cf. Morrison 2007, 27.

148 Different narratologists use different models of narratorial identification. For the distinction made here see Pfister (1977, 20), who describes this first layer as the "empirischen Autor in seiner literatur-soziologisch beschreibbaren Rolle als Werkproduzenten".

149 Cf. Pfister 1977, 21; Stoddard 2004, 40–42. This narratorial-authorial layer is not distinguished by De Jong (2004, 3–4), who considers it unnecessary. Within her approach this dimension is sufficiently dealt with by means of focalisation, i.e. focusing on different aspects of the same narrator. I retain the term, however, as part of a system of corresponding narrators and addressees (historical author—historical reader, ideal author—ideal reader/external addressee, internal narrator/teacher—internal addressee).

is 'Nicander' (whose name is, however, never used within the poem in this role) in his didactic role as an expert teacher, presenting his material (animals, bites, haunts, cures) to a pupil, who is named Hermesianax in the proem of the *Theriaca*. In the course of the poem this addressee, who is named only once (*Ther.* 3), occasionally appears to have been extended to, or supplanted by a wider audience of people who would benefit from the teacher's knowledge (a 'general you'), and who, as a second internal addressee act as a collective body of pictured students.[150] Both the addressed Hermesianax and the anonymous collective of addressees, referred to as ἀνδράσιν in 494, exist within the text only, and only on this level.[151] The internal addressee will be treated more fully in 4.3.

The fourth layer is a surprising one, and it is one of the most interesting narratological elements of the poem. It concerns only the poem's epilogue, which contains the *sphragis* revealing the name of Nicander, as well as his place of origin, viz. Clarus (957–958):

> Καί κεν Ὁμηρείοιο καὶ εἰσέτι Νικάνδροιο
> μνῆστιν ἔχοις, τὸν ἔθρεψε Κλάρου νιφόεσσα πολίχνη.
>
> 'And now you will always have the memory of Homeric Nicander,
> whom the snowy town of Clarus raised.'

This *sphragis* thus appears to reveal the name of the teacher (i.e. the third layer speaker) who has been teaching Hermesianax all along. Yet these two lines do not refer to the *role* of the teacher: they are a reflection of the activities of a poet who has just presented us with a memorable work. Who is the speaker of these lines? An unexpected shift can be observed from the internal 'anonymous' teacher to an external speaker, who refers to 'the Homeric Nicander', thus referring to the historical Nicander. This speaker has ostensibly left the world of

150 A fifth layer can be distinguished if characters are included in the analysis, e.g. the (implicit) dialogue between the ass (as internal narrator) and the snake (as internal addressee) within the story told in *Ther.* 352–353. This layer, although interesting from a narratological point of view, is irrelevant to the analysis of the different layers of 'Nicander' discussed here.

151 It is of course not impossible that the Hermesianax addressed in the poem exists on other levels as well, e.g. as the historical reader of the first level (perhaps as a friend of the historical Nicander) or on the second. From a narratological point of view, however, one needs to distinguish strictly between what the text teaches us, and what we infer from it with regard to Hermesianax as a historical person.

the internal teacher-narrator, and assumes a new role, as he is clearly no longer addressing the pupil Hermesianax, who only existed within the world of the internal teacher.[152] Moreover, the external speaker introduced in the *Theriaca*'s closing lines appears to comment on the historical author, whom he calls the Homeric Nicander of Clarus.[153] This speaker may be referring to *himself* as the historical Nicander of Clarus,[154] but he is not a character in his own story: he does not present himself as a teacher, as he did in *Ther.* 1–956, but as a poet who has just finished presenting us a didactic 'story' in which a wise teacher figures as the primary *internal* 'narrator', the didactic teacher.

The poet may, however, well be introducing a new speaker here, an anonymous commentator evaluating the merits of the poem just presented by the historical author. The narrator in the epilogue does not actually state that *he* is 'the Homeric Nicander' and could therefore well be yet another narrator who anonymously tells us that now we have the memory of Nicander, who is referred to in the third person. There are no evident reasons to assume that the external narrator of the epilogue is the second layer poet Nicander (although the *historical* author is of course Nicander), and we may well consider that these lines contain the focalisation of someone else.[155] Although this shift in the *Theriaca*'s epilogue is unobtrusive, it marks a significant breach between the teacher, who is knowledgeable only within his world of snakes and herbs, and the epilogue's speaker, who does not exist within the teacher's world, but implicitly makes claims to *kudos*, hoping the poet's memory will last. Whether it is 'Nicander' who makes this claim to fame, or an external commentator, thus remains unclear. With this shift the poet confuses the reader—probably deliberately—by ostensibly blending with the historical author in the first layer. To be sure, this external speaker is not the historical, extra-textual Nicander from the first layer, but a construct of the historical author. It is the

152 Viz. as an internal narrator; De Jong 2004, 1.

153 The sudden shift from didactic teacher to external narrator causes confusion, which can be considered a deliberate attempt at *metalepsis*; see De Jong (2009, 99–106). As she points out, the 'blending of narrative voices' (99) is not a matter of sloppiness on the author's part, but an ostensibly consciously used technique playing with transgressions and ambiguity of narrative voice.

154 In which case this voice is that of the 'implied author', i.e. 'the version of the author as implied by the text and constructed by the reader from the text' (Morrison 2007, 27); cf. Chatman (1978, 147–151), who in turn borrows the concept from Booth.

155 For the phenomenon cf. Hes. *Th.* 22, where the shepherd Hesiod is referred to in the third person, but subsequently as 'me' in 24. There too we get the impression that the narrator referring to Hesiod is an external one, although the shift is very brief.

way in which the historical author wants to be presented, by himself or by an external commentator, *in this particular passage*, reflecting on the rest of the poem.

This model thus helps to distinguish between Nicander, the historical Hellenistic poet from Colophon, and the first-person internal speaker who speaks to his internal addressee Hermesianax in the proem of the poem as a teacher. The teacher's (or rather the poet's) name is postponed to the very end of the poem, and there is no other indication that the internal addressee, or we as readers, are addressed by the historical, 'real' Nicander. The conclusion that the historical author Nicander was a knowledgeable doctor, not an ignorant versifier, is primarily based on what the internal speaker says in his role as a teacher, who gives the impression that he has seen all the remote haunts and dangerous (sometimes even fictitious) animals himself. Yet this idea, which Morrison calls the 'narratorial quasi-biography', is deceptive, since we cannot know where the role of the narrator ends and where the historical author comes to the fore.[156] Although the internal teacher-narrator is predominantly a covert one, from the very first words of the poem he makes clear that he is speaking in his capacity as a man of learning, presenting himself as an authority. The teacher does not speak to us as a priest, not even as a poet, but purely as an expert on a very specific topic. This role, the role of a teacher, is assumed by the internal speaker throughout the poem—save for the last two lines. It is a role quintessential to the nature of didactic poetry. It should be stressed here, however, that the teacher's self-presentation as a true καθηγημών is an adopted one. We may get the impression that the teacher has travelled the journey, now taken by the pupil, before, thus showing his pupil the way, yet the impression is all there is.[157]

If we are to assess the role played by (iii) the unnamed first-person internal speaker who speaks in the role of the teacher, we find someone who is covert most of the time. He expounds his material thoroughly, but without ever telling us anything about his own life, whether he is a doctor or not, or sharing his personal experiences with regard to snakes or poisoning. His stance is markedly detached. It is very remote from Hesiod, Empedocles or even Aratus, to the extent that the teacher almost becomes a reporter whose interest lies in

156 See Morrison 2007, 27–35 and Volk 2002, 37–38.

157 See De Jong 2004, 1 with references. The distinction is clarified by Morrison (2007, 30–31), "For audiences unfamiliar with the real author, or relying only on texts by the author for their information about him, there is no way of being sure that the real author was in fact anything like he portrays himself in the text."

a voyeuristic interest in suffering.[158] Yet in commenting on the snakes under scrutiny occasionally the speaker's (though not necessarily the teacher's) personal voice can be discerned. Here we find a range of words balancing between objectivity and the subjectivity of the poet. When Nicander qualifies certain animals as σμερδαλέος (161, 207, 293, 765) or λευγαλέος (167, 836) it is for the reader to decide whether they are so by nature, or whether the reader is looking through the speaker's eye.[159] The adjective φοινήεις could be explained as 'red, bloody', but 'murderous' seems equally apt in 158, which shows a shift from the objective to a characterisation of the asp's vile intent. If a snake is said to be lurking (λοχάδην, 125), are we to picture a snake simply waiting for his natural pray, or a monster whose only goal is a treacherous attack, coming on like an assassin driven by nothing but evil? It is this sort of language that creates an atmosphere of horror, yet the speaker does not resort to gross depictions of fabulous monsters that would diminish the credibility of Nicander's carefully constructed image.

Other passages are less ambiguous and show a somewhat more overt speaker. A good example is 186, ἐχθρῶν που τέρα κεῖνα καρήασιν ἐμπελάσειε, 'may those monsters attack the heads of my enemies!' Even if we take τέρα as a neutral term instead of the pejorative 'monsters', there can be no doubt about the obvious fear of these snakes as personally expressed by the speaker. In 759 Egypt is called an οὐλοὸς αἶα, 'grim land', yet it does not seem to accommodate many more, or significantly more dangerous, creatures than other regions mentioned by the poet. Here too the internal speaker's personal opinion appears to seep through.

### 4.2 *Fictionalisation of Live Speech*

The internal speaker, assuming the role of a teacher, functions as a didactic *persona*. He is the one who calls his addressee (and, indirectly, us) to pay attention at the start of his lessons. This is done in such a way that we are, so to speak, present at his 'class'.[160] This important and widespread feature of

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158 See Toohey 1996, 64–73; Sistakou 2012, 234–250.

159 Such qualifications may bear connotations of their Homeric contexts. E.g. in Homer σμερδαλέος is virtually always used by the primary narrator, whereas λευγαλέος is typically used in embedded narrative. It is therefore not improbable that the latter expresses subjectivity more strongly than the former, which may be indicative of a more overt narratorial statement. Such distinctions are, however, hard to prove, considering the lack of comparative material c.q. embedded narrative in the *Theriaca*.

160 Sistakou (2012, 241) aptly captures the setting by referring to Nic.'s presentation as a 'masterclass'.

didactic poetry can be labelled fictionalisation of live speech.[161] It is created by means of various techniques.[162]

A first element in creating the illusion of live speech through direct address is the use of directives. The addressee is not merely told a story, but instead he is instructed to listen, pay attention, mind, heed, or consider.[163] If he listens well he will find the information imparted to be true. Even though the addressee is not likely to put this knowledge to use immediately, the impression is given throughout the poem that any of the snakebites described could be incurred any moment, followed by action readily taken by the instructed pupil. An additional aspect of the use of directives is their frequency. The addressee is not just told at the outset of the poem to sit back and listen, but is repeatedly addressed, in order to keep up the impression of the pupil's physical presence. Thus we find instructions repeated over and over, on which the pupil is supposed to act, albeit not right away.

A second way of signposting consists of references to the here and now. This is achieved most evidently by the use of the adverb νῦν, often used in combination with a directive.[164] A third way to create a sense of the present is the use of the future tense. This is the case when the pupil will be able to act in the future based on teachings in the present.[165] A special case is the use of the performative future, which does not express future actions, but coincides with actions performed in the present.[166] This only applies to first-person speech acts uttered by the narrator.[167] It conveys a strong sense of address in the present, expressing at the same time that the address will take up a certain amount of time, viz. the duration of the poem.

### 4.3 *Internal Addressee*

Within the narrative structure of didactic poetry the addressee is paired with the narrator. A clear distinction can be made between the internal and the external addressee in the case of this particular kind of poetry. In didactic

161 For the related concept of 'poetic simultaneity' see section 3.8 and Effe 1977, 69–70.

162 Some of these techniques apply to other, related genres as well, e.g. epideictic oratory, paraenetic elegy.

163 E.g. φράζεο (157), εὖ δ' ἂν … ἴδοις (209), εὖ δ' ἂν … μάθοις (258), εὐ δ' ἂν … γνοίῃς (320), ἄγε … εἴρεο (359), τεκμαίρευ (396), πιφαύσκεο (411) etc.

164 E.g. Νῦν δ' ἄγε (*Ther.* 359, 528, 636); cf. Hes. *Op.* 202, 270, 275, 396 for similar references of the narrator to the here and now.

165 E.g. δήεις (*Ther.* 100, 211, 373, 384, 463, 661, 714, 786).

166 See Faraone 1995, 1–15.

167 E.g. αὐδήσω (*Ther.* 770).

poems the role of the internal addressee is played by the 'pupil'. Although this teacher-pupil construction is evident in most didactic poems, the addressee can be all but absent, and does not always emerge as a named person, be they real or fictitious. This is particularly evident in Aratus' *Phaenomena*.[168] This lack of a named addressee, although not problematic in itself, can nevertheless diminish the credibility of the didactic setting. It seems that this problem was felt by many ancient didactic poets, and many of them dealt with the issue by inserting a named addressee at the beginning of the poem.[169] Even though the person mentioned there as an addressed pupil often plays a limited role, his presence adds to the dramatic setting necessary for the didactic credibility.[170]

What do we know about Hermesianax, the formal internal addressee mentioned in the proem of the *Theriaca*? Nicander tells us that he is the 'most honoured of many relatives', which could induce us to believe he is a real person.

That said, he may well be nothing more than a fictitious foil.[171] If Hermesianax is a fellow doctor, as Jacques suggests, it is interesting that the *Alexipharmaca* is addressed to Protagoras, who could be another fellow expert. Nothing is said, however, of the expertise of either addressee. A striking similarity is found in the opening of *Idyll* 11 of Theocritus, the bucolic letter about Polyphemus' unrequited love for Galatea, addressed to a certain Nicias, who appears to be a

168 For a similar lack of an expressed addressee cf. the *Periegesis* of Dionysius Periegetes.

169 For the conventional necessity of inserting a named addressee in didactic poetry see e.g. Stoddard 2004, 15 with references to earlier discussions. This convention of a named addressee (as e.g. Cyrnus in Theognis, or Perses in the *Works and Days*) does of course not mean that such a named addressee is necessarily historical rather than fictional. "[…] it was conventional for ancient poets to address didactic material to a named individual. In this way the poet is able to present himself as a wise and sympathetic person concerned for the welfare of his friend, rather than a lecturing old curmudgeon, haranguing the general public"; Welcker (1826) as quoted by Stoddard.

170 This is the case in e.g. the *Works and Days* (Perses), Empedocles' *Peri Physeos* (Pausanias), Nicander's *Theriaca* (Hermesianax), *Alexipharmaca* (Protagoras), Oppian's *Cynegetica* (Caracalla), Oppian's *Halieutica* (Antonius), Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (Memmius), Vergil's *Georgics* (Maecenas), Nemesianus' *Cynegetica* (the sons of Carus). In the case of Archestratus' *Hedypatheia* the two addressees (Moschus and Cleandrus) mentioned do not appear to have been inserted in the opening of the poem, although the poem's fragmentary state makes it difficult to establish a precise order; they are not mentioned together.

171 *Ther*. 3, φίλ' Ἑρμησιάναξ, πολέων κυδίστατε παῶν. According to Gow & Scholfield (1953, 7 n. 2) the name Hermesianax was quite common; cf. Di Marco 1998.

doctor too.[172] The similarity not only lies in the address itself, but also in the rest of the poem, which facetiously presents a pseudo-recipe followed by pseudo-instruction.

The lack of consistency practiced by the narrator is problematic in assessing whether or not Hermesianax is a doctor. From the proem we clearly learn that the addressee will be instructed so that he can extend help to those bitten by poisonous animals.[173] This does not mean, of course, that these lessons are not useful for the addressee himself. But the narrator tells his addressee that he will be respected and praised by those he aids: the lessons are perhaps not only meant to be useful, but also to gain respect and hence improve one's position in society. Yet elsewhere in the poem we hear little about other victims. The instructions primarily tell what the addressee needs to do in order to save his *own* life, not those of others.[174] The same goes for the details about snakes, their haunts, and their looks. If Hermesianax is really only a doctor, then there is no need to know all this; summing up the ingredients would suffice.[175] Although this may seem to be due to sloppiness, Nic. may well be playfully imitating Hesiod here. Just as Hesiod's addresses and intentions keep varying in the course of the *Works and Days*, Nic. does not maintain consistency of roles either. The poet starts out with a Hermesianax that plays the role of a potential medic, but Nic. does not follow this initial purpose in the process of composition, and ends up with an apparently odd, though not patently obvious, inconsistency.

Is there a connection to the (proto-)Hellenistic poet Hermesianax? The scholia are confusing here. We are told on the one hand that the addressee is the

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172 Nicias, occurring again in *Idyll* 28 and ep. 8, is probably a real person, who lived in Miletus; see Hunter 1999, 215. He may well be the epigrammatist of the same name.

173 *Ther.* 4–7.

174 Cf. *Ther.* 539–540, πῖνε δ' ἐνιτρίψας κοτυλήρυτον ὄξος … | ἢ οἴνης· ῥέα δ' αὖτε καὶ ὕδατι κῆρας ἀλύξεις, 'drink them after crumbling them in a *cotyle* of vinegar … or wine. Even with water you may easily escape death.'; *Ther.* 915–916, Ἢν δέ σ' ὁδοιπλανέοντα … | νύχμα κατασπέρχῃ, 'if some bite should call for haste as *you* are on your yourney …'. This inconsistency was already noticed by Klauser (1898, 3), who considers this aspect as a clear division between the *Alexipharmaca*, in which the addressee Protagoras is given instructions to help others, and the *Theriaca*, directed to those who are victims themselves: *quod carmen* [i.e. Theriaca] *ita comparatum est, ut legentes morsus ferarum vitare ac bestiis laesi remedia sumere ipsi iubeantur. contra a Theriacis Alexipharmaca Protagorae cuidam Cyziceno inscripta, quibus de venenis in potu cibove homini datis eorumque remediis poeta exposuit, ita differunt, ut singulis venenis remedia, quibus adversus ea utendum est, adiungatur, ac Protagoras ille non ipse venenis laesus fingatur, sed aliis, qui illa potu temerario hauserint, medicaturus*.

175 See Overduin 2009a, 82–84; 2009b, 372–374.

poet Hermesianax, a friend of Philitas and writer of the *Persica* and the *Leontion*.[176] On the other hand we learn that this cannot be the same Hermesianax, who lived at least a generation before Nicander, as in fact Nicander himself states in his work *On the poets of Colophon*; he thus cannot have been a contemporary. The confusion may have been caused by the fact that both poets came from Colophon, in which case Nicander would be addressing Hermesianax as a contemporary fellow poet from the same town.[177] But it is also plausible that he is a relative of Nicander, as is stated in the proem of the *Theriaca*.

Although the internal addressee is initially equated with the named pupil in the proem (viz. Hermesianax in the *Theriaca*, who is not mentioned by name again), this does not preclude the introduction of a second internal addressee later in the poem. This occurs in 493–494, which functions as a brief second proem to the second half of the first part of the poem.[178] Here the poet's address ('I will expound to mankind …') is not to Hermesianax any longer, but to 'men' in general. The address of Hermesianax was purposeful in the proem of the poem as the mention of his name provides the illusion of a credible didactic partner, but it very soon (from line 21) becomes clear to whom the narrator's lessons are really aimed, viz. everyone, or perhaps everyone who is likely to benefit from the narrator's knowledge. This type of addressee, addressed as 'men' or 'mankind', can be considered a 'general you'. Although the poet's address in 494 could be considered a formal shift, what we have is in fact the confirmation of what was already felt throughout the poem, from line 21 onwards. The invisibility of the initial addressee, Hermesianax, automatically makes us forget about him. When the poet finally addresses 'men' after hundreds of lines we are not surprised, as it merely confirms what the audience perceived all along. Nic.'s instructions after the mythological excursus of the proem (e.g. 'make a bed for yourself', 25) are not aimed at Hermesianax, but at a general audience.

176 The substantial fragment from the third book of the *Leontion* (CA 7, pp. 98–100 = 3 Lightfoot) can arguably be categorised as catalogue poetry (although in the vein of elegiac narrative), and is as such closely related to Nicander's didactic works; on catalogue poetry see section 3.12.

177 See also Gow & Scholfield 1953, 7. The poet Hermesianax, staging Mimnermus and Antimachus in his *Leontion*, already shows a strong awareness of the Colophonian connection between the town and its history of poets, a connection enhanced by Nicander's Colophonian origin, his use of the name Hermesianax, and his interest in Colophonian poets as is reflected in the lost *On the poets of Colophon*; see Σ *Ther.* 3.

178 Τῶν μὲν ἐγὼ θρόνα πάντα καὶ ἀλθεστήρια νούσων | φύλλα τε ῥιζοτόμον τε διείσομαι ἀνδράσιν ὥρην […]. For the structure of the poem see section 5.4.

Distinguished layers of address are not unique to the poet of the *Theriaca*, the evident model being the *Works and Days*, which shows similar shifts of address. There is Perses, the first internal addressee, who is addressed repeatedly, and who is the initial object of the narrator's criticism.[179] As it turns out, the narrator's harsh words are aimed at the kings as well, as they have inspired Perses to act in the ignominous way he does, which makes the kings the second internal addressee of the poem.[180] In addition to Perses and the Kings one can discern a less visible third addressee present in large parts of the *Works and Days*, in the form of a general second person singular.[181] Here Perses is absent, and we often find instructions aimed at anyone who wants to know about farming, not Perses in particular. It is this sense of generality that makes the reader assume a third internal addressee, similar to Nicander's 'mankind': a 'general you'.[182]

What is the purpose of these shifts from formal to general addressees? Although the address of proper pupils in didactic poetry is an essential feature of the dramatic setting, such poetry is ultimately aimed at a wider audience; these poems are never merely lectures or letters to single persons, even if they purport to be so. As has been observed for Hesiod, the address of a 'general you' in which the external addressee can recognise itself aids in capturing the audience's attention. In addition, we, as audience, are not just interested in what Hesiod has to say to Perses, but rather in what the poet has to offer to all of us readers.[183] This is taken up by the narrator, who does not just want to instruct Hermesianax, but also wants to display his wide learning and knowledge of

179 Perses is addressed by name in *Op*. 27, 213, 274, 286, 299, 397, 611, 633, 641.

180 Like Perses, they are addressed in the second person (*Op*. 248–249).

181 For an analysis of the role of Perses and the Kings as addressees in the *Works and Days* see Schmidt 1986, 29–79; the concept of a 'general you' as an additional addressee in the *Works and Days* is signalled in 52–71.

182 An interesting parallel is found in the *Hedypatheia* of Archestratus, where the internal addressees Moschus and Cleandrus merely seem to represent a general audience, or, as Olson & Sens (2000, xliii) put it, "a restricted set of internal addressees for the presentation of paraenetic material allegedly intended for the considerations of human beings".

183 In the case of the *Works and Days* an additional aspect of the use of the 'general you' lies in its possibility to create unmarked shifts between addresses to Perses and the kings on the one hand, and to the 'general you' on the other. As a result it is difficult, or even impossible, to be certain all the time who is addressed. In this way the poet can create a balance between harsh words aimed at Perses (which the audience does not take personally) and positive words aimed at the 'general you' (which the audience accepts as aimed at them as well).

the world to 'men' in general, a category with which the audience can easily identify, even if they are not likely to put the teacher's lessons into practice themselves.

What is more important here, however, is that the 'general you' merges unnoticed with the external addressee (see section 4.4), an audience not of men in general, but of learned readers who look beyond the bare contents of the poem. This implicit shift of address is not accidental, but of primal importance, as Nicander wrote the *Theriaca* for the external addressee in the first place. As a work of art, full of learned play, etymology, aetiology, and extravagant poetic language, irreverent of the contents, the *Theriaca* is written to impress the cultured reader, well versed in Alexandrian poetics and the diction of Homer and Hesiod, who can fully appreciate Nicander's attempts at innovation. The poem's 'message' is thus of a literary rather than a realistic nature. It is for this reason that the poet plays sophisticatedly with shifting addressees, gradually revealing the poem's artfulness to his learned audience.

### 4.4 *External Addressee*

In addition to the internal addressee (or addressees) an external addressee needs to be distinguished. This addressee consists of either an audience or a readership. Although it is impossible to disprove that Nicander considered his external addressee to be a body of medical experts, analysis of the poet's diction seems to point at an audience primarily engaged in literary play and tradition. He counts on them being aware of Alexandrian aesthetics and knowing their classics, both archaic and Hellenistic.[184] Just like Aratus' external addressee, they are concerned with elegance of form, rather than contents; if they are interested in contents (as Aratus' audience may be) it is for the sake of academic learning, not practicality. This kind of ideal reader (or listener) appears to be implicitly addressed throughout the poem, but only as far as the poet's material contains literary play and rises above the base subject of reptiles and recipes.

Where can the external addressee be found in the poem? A passage that seems to be addressed to the implied reader is the second half of the proem (8–20). Here we find a mythological excursus that is not only of interest to the internal addressee, but also to an audience concerned with arcane learning. It is not, to be sure, an apostrophe, but when the poet addresses the internal addressee in 21 (ἀλλὰ σύ γε), he does seem to refocus, after having addressed

184 Occasionally we get the impression Nicander is writing for an Alexandrian audience, e.g. when he digresses on the habitat of the hippopotamus in Egypt (566–571), the dangerous creatures of Egypt (759–768), or mythology-aetiology related to the delta of the Nile (309–319), close to Alexandria.

a wider audience in his mythological excursus.[185] Although other sections of the *Theriaca* dealing with aetiology or mythology are less explicit in their shift of address, it is evident that they are directed at the external addressee, since they are of no instructional use to Hermesianax. Unlike the purposeful myths Hesiod tells Perses, Nicander's myths do not contain wise lessons for his pupil. They are mainly there to entertain the learned reader, both in their depiction of recondite knowledge, and their allusions to earlier poems.

Apart from the observation that we probably need to picture a learned audience, one that can be expected to get the poet's puns, rarities and play, very little can be said about the external addressee. The two most likely possibilities of contact with the external addressee are performance, through recitation of (parts of) the poem, or reading, in which case we are to imagine that the poem was disseminated. The former option, recitation, perhaps in a sympotic context, where learned poets tried to cap their peers by outwitting them in originality and abstruse knowledge, seems less plausible. This is partly due to the length of the poem, which does not lend itself easily for performance, in comparison with epigram for instance. The second option, reading, is much more plausible. Even though little can be said about the dissemination of the poem, the *Theriaca* shows signs of being 'book poetry', primarily the acrostic (343–353), which is lost on an audience of listeners. In comparison with the *Works and Days*, however, a marked difference between Hesiod's and Nicander's context can be discerned. In the case of the *Works and Days* we can imagine an audience consisting of citizen-farmers, who felt that the address of the 'general you' was aimed at them, as it concerned their daily life.[186] In the case of the *Theriaca* we can construct an entirely different audience, not consisting of 'ploughmen, herdsmen and woodcutters', as Nicander implies, but of learned *literati*.[187] Even if Nicander's 'general you' would point at fellow doctors, as Jacques maintains, it is in their capacity as connoisseurs of literature, not as physicians, that they are addressed.

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185 *Ther.* 186 seems to contain another instance where the poet zooms out from the internal addressee to a wider audience. There the narrator comments on the gruesome nature of the lethal asp: Ἐχθρῶν που τέρα κεῖνα καρήασιν ἐμπελάσειε, 'be they no friends of mine whose heads these monsters assail' (cf. section 4.1). Although these words could be directed to Hermesianax/the 'general you' only, we get the impression the poet is including his external addressee, indulging in a brief personal comment on the subject. The lack of personal utterances elsewhere gives this line an unexpected turn and underlines the suggestion of a more general address.

186 See Lardinois 1998, 322 n. 14.

187 Cf. *Ther.* 1–7.

### 4.5 *Conclusion*

Rather than simply summing up his information, Nicander has created a complex didactic setting. It consists of shifting internal addressees (both named, viz. Hermesianax in 3, and unnamed, viz. ἀνδράσιν in 494), an external addressee that is hinted at through learned allusions and the acrostic, an internal narrator, posing as teacher, and an external one, commenting on the historical author in the last two lines of the poem. This makes it difficult to pinpoint 'Nicander' in this analysis, who is not only assumed as author, but also emerges as the implied author within the poem as mentioned in the epilogue—not to mention the autonymous acrostic (345–353), referring to either the real or the implied author Nicander. What we see here is a poet at play, playing with conventions of the genre, and varying on the possibilities of the roles of narrator and addressee that are already apparent in the *Works and Days*. Such play confirms the status of the *Theriaca* as a literary work, and therefore the status of Nicander as a poet, concerned with literary presentation, and not medical or biological facts.

## 5 Structure of the *Theriaca*

In general didactic poetry owes its structure to the internal logic of the single elements that make up its subject. As distinct from narrative epic there is no chronological principle of order dictated by the events described. This does of course not mean that the internal structure of a didactic poem is relevant only to the way it succeeds in providing a clear catalogue: the structure of the *Theriaca* is an integral part of its poetic message.[188] Although the poem may appear as a long list of snakes, followed by a list of plants, in its structure it aligns itself with the tradition initiated by Hesiod, and followed by Aratus, thus underlining the poet's intention to be part of a literary tradition. There are also other features of the poem that can be interpreted as literary statements in the Hellenistic context of tradition and innovation.

### 5.1 *Proem: Hymnic Invocation?*

From the outset of Greek epic literature, starting with Homer, the proem has played a very specific role in epic poetry. In later epic it often embodies the

188 For interesting observations regarding the structure of the *Theriaca* as part of the poet's aesthetics see also Effe 1974a, 52–62. For a general overview of the structure of the poem see Appendix 1.

essential characteristics of the play between literary tradition and innovation. Every epic poet has to address the issue of showing his debts to tradition, yet he needs to shape this tradition to fit his own purposes and convey his own message.[189] Within the format of the proem two elements are generally important: the invocation of a divine agent, usually an appeal to the Muse(s) for information and authority, and the opening word(s).[190] Although the two elements play different roles, the initial word is usually part of the invocation, and often cannot be separated from it.

The opening lines of a didactic poem usually contain an appeal to the divine, consisting of the invocation of a deity, or an adhortation to invoke a deity.[191] Appeals like these are a general feature of epic poetry, including epic narrative such as the *Homeric Hymns*, and mock-epic pieces.[192] This divine agent can be the Muse (not otherwise specified), the collective of Muses, a single god, or even a selection of gods.[193] The most common addressee is, however, the Muse, whether addressed as θέα, Μοῦσα, the plural Μοῦσαι or by means of a paraphrase.[194] The widespread use of such invocations within the genre shows its ingrained nature within the epic tradition.[195] When compared to

189 Cf. Pulleyn 2000, 115; Fakas 2001, 5–6.

190 Cf. Murray (1981, 90–94), who shows that the invocations in Homer and Hesiod—requests for 'inspiration' from the Muses—consist largely of a plea for information, not for creativity or a poetic spark, let alone for ecstasy or possession. If the Muses grant this request the poet's invocation becomes, moreover, a means of establishing authority in his presentation. See also De Jong 1987, 45–53.

191 For invocation cf. Hes. *Op.* 1, Lucr. *DRN* 1.1–2, Verg. *G.* 1–42. For adhortation cf. Hes. *Th.* 1, Arat. 1–2.

192 For invocations in epic cf. Hom. *Il.* 1.1, *Od.* 1.1, *Thebais* fr. 1 *PEG* (= *EGF* = *Certamen* 15), *Epigoni* fr. 1 *PEG* (= *EGF*), A.R. 1.1. For epic narrative cf. the *Homeric Hymns* and the *Hymns* of Callimachus. For mock-epic cf. the ps.-Homeric *Battle of Frogs and Mice* (*Batr.* 1), Hippon. 128 *IEG*$^2$ (126 Degani), Matro's Ἀττικὸν δεῖπνον (Olson & Sens 1999 = *SH* 534.1), and Luc, *VH* 2.24.7. An appeal to the Muse has been suggested for the *Battle of the Weasel and the Mice* (*P.Mich.* inv. 6946.1 = *SSH* 1190; see West 2003b, 258–262), although the fragmentary papyrus does not necessarily suggest such a conjecture.

193 Either Apollo ('Phoebus' in A.R. 1.1) in his capacity as god of poetry, or Zeus as the omnipotent equivalent of the Stoic *logos* (Arat. 1–2). The appeal to multiple gods is found in Verg. *G.* 1.1–42.

194 For the latter see Batr. 1, χορὸς ἐξ Ἑλικῶνος.

195 The function of the invocation has been the subject of much debate. According to Ford (1992, 19) "the invocation is essentially a prayer to the Muse to tell a story". True as this may be, it does not tell us why the poet needs the Muse. One possibility is that poet needs inspiration to perform his task. Although the idea of the inspired poet became topical in later times, it does not really apply to Greek epic, where the poet knows well in advance

Hesiod and Aratus, Nicander's two forebears, an interesting pattern can be discerned: in the *Works and Days* Hesiod initially invokes the Muses, but soon purposefully includes Zeus in his opening. Aratus inverts the Hesiodic order and starts, literally, with Zeus, but incorporates the Muses at the end of his hymnic opening. Nicander does not vary the order of his divine addressees, but refrains from such appeals altogether. He does not need any assistance from Muse or god, but is capable himself of fulfilling his complicated task. His knowledge is based on his own research, or so he makes us belief, and there is nothing the Muse has to offer him: his work does not need validation, or other authorities than himself. Moreover, the poet does not need to rely on the Muse as the daughter of Memory, since his learning can be found in books, a marked difference from Homer. The poet's choice to disobey the traditional 'rule' of invocation is not only found in the *Theriaca*, but in the *Alexipharmaca* as well. It shows just how independent Nicander considers himself from the traditional view of divine information, even if this tradition had become a literary topos in the Hellenistic era.[196] Even in later epic didactic poetry the appeal to gods or Muses is still felt to be obligatory, as can be seen in the proem of ps.-Oppian's *Cynegetica*.[197] Nicander's choice thus draws attention to the tradition by markedly refraining from following it. His choice is, however, a means of variation, not a lack of awareness, as is shown by the subsequent mythological transition in which the idea of inspiration is hinted at.[198]

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what will be the subject of his poem. To state that the poet appeals to the god to pass his or her knowledge on to him is not incorrect, but we are probably to think of assistance of the Muse, who makes sure all details, as well as the flow of the story are secured. The Muse can therefore provide information, authority, validation, and sanctioning. "The poet looks to the Muse to supply knowledge of what lies outside his own experience"; Heubeck 1988, 68. It is striking that Nicander, who is otherwise an evident follower of the epic tradition, refrains from such an appeal for divine help, or rather from the topos of the appeal to gods or Muses. An alternative has been proposed by Clauss (2006), who considers the opening word to refer to the goddess Rhea. Despite his relevant arguments as to the thematic relation of the goddess to the *Theriaca* I fail to see how Rhea could play a significant role in the poet's initial proem. Clauss' parallel from the *Alexipharmaca* ('Nicander can *easily* instruct Protagoras because he lives near *Rheia*, p. 169) is too strained. The idea of wordplay, however, as argued by Clauss, is not impossible.

196 See Fakas 2001, 63 n. 190.

197 D.P. 62–63, ὑμεῖς δ', ὦ Μοῦσαι, σκολιὰς ἐνέποιτε κελεύθους, | ἀρξάμεναι στοιχηδὸν ἀφ' ἑσπέρου Ὠκεανοῖο; Opp. *H.* 1.73–79 and [Opp.] *C.* 1.16–19.

198 The reference to Hesiod at the Permessus river in *Ther.* 10–12 recalls his encounter with the Muses in *Th.* 22–34, playing on the topos of divine inspiration.

### 5.2 *Mythological Transition*

Although a hymnic opening is evidently lacking from the proem, Nicander offers an interesting alternative. Lines 8–20 comprise the second part of the formal proem. Here we do not find an address to the Muse either, but instead Nicander briefly offers two mythological references to the origin of deadly monsters. First he tells us that all deadly beasts originate from the blood of the Titans, as allegedly taught by Hesiod (8–12), and subsequently he includes the exemplum of the death of Orion through a scorpion, sent by Artemis as a punishment (13–20). Nicander may not need divine assistance, but the myths sketched in the proem do show his reliance on the mythical origins of his material. As such, they provide him with his subject matter, not unlike the Muse who tells the bards of old what and how to sing, when their assistance is requested. That the story was allegedly told by Hesiod, shows just how much this poet is partaking in the role of epic's Muse.[199]

Another feature of the second part of the proem is its intertextuality. Not only does the story of Orion and the scorpion remind us of Aratus' brief treatment of the same story in *Phaenomena* 637–646, but, as Effe observed, it shows some relevant textual similarities as well, too striking to be coincidental.[200] Apart from giving us a *terminus post quem* for the *Theriaca*, the reference is a clear poetical statement of Nicander, as it shows of which tradition he wants to be part. This is the more evident considering the references to Hesiod (mentioned in line 8, but see also the next section): already in the proem it becomes clear that Nicander has both Hesiod and Aratus on his mind. It is them he wants to be measured against, being the heir of the didactic tradition initiated by Hesiod, and revived in the Hellenistic era by Aratus.

### 5.3 *The First Word: ῥεῖα*

The opening word of an epic poem functions as its starting shot. It triggers the attention of both the external addressee, the listener, and the internal addressee, which is initially often the Muse. Apart from drawing attention, and intrinsically stating that the poem has begun, the opening often contains the essence of the poem phrased in one word, or sometimes in a short phrase. The most obvious examples of this emphatic placement of the principal theme

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199 For the importance of Nicander's reference to Ἀσκραῖος … Ἡσίοδος (*Ther.* 11–12) as an acknowledgement of Hesiod's status as the primogenitor of didactic poetry cf. Verg. *G.* 2.176, who coins his work an *Ascraeum … carmen* (imitated by Columella in 10.436); see Thomas 1988a, 190.

200 For similarities between Aratus' and Nicander's treatment of the story see Effe 1974b, 120 and notes on *Ther.* 13–20.

are μῆνιν as the opening word in the *Iliad*, ἄνδρα in the *Odyssey*, and Vergil's famous imitation *arma virumque* in the *Aeneis*.[201] The poet, following the epic tradition, thus has two choices. He can either open with the poem's theme, or he can put the deity to whom he appeals in this *sedes*.[202] Nicander's choice is again an odd one, as the poem opens with ῥεῖα. Although the adverb is not devoid of thematic relevance, it does not in any way state the poem's subject. Just like the lacking appeal to the Muse, the absence of a noun signposting the poem's subject cannot but constitute a deliberate choice of the poet. Not only does he not need a Muse to help him with his task, but he actually can finish it 'easily' (ῥεῖα). This bold statement, which shows the poet's self-assured stance, is the more remarkable considering the poem itself. Neither its subject (a technical biological and botanical subject matter) nor its diction (arcane vocabulary) is in fact easy.[203]

However, an explanation can be found if the opening word is compared to lines 5–7 of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, in which ῥέα/ῥεῖα is used four times, three times at the beginning of the line (i.e. in the same *sedes* as *Ther*. 1) and a fourth time after the *caesura* in the third foot of the fifth line.[204] All four times the word is used to describe the power of Zeus and the ease with which he can accomplish whatever he wishes.[205] According to West the adverb is frequently used in aretalogies, especially of gods.[206] It is likely that Nicander had *Works and Days* 5–7 in mind when he chose ῥεῖα as the opening of the first line. It implies that the poet considers himself capable of doing whatever he is going to do with great ease. Not only can he accomplish his plans just as easily as Zeus can, but he does not need the aid of the Muse to inspire him, let alone to provide him with the necessary knowledge.[207] In a way the poet takes the role of a god

201 See Pulleyn 2000, 115. Although the thematic relevance of the first word in epic poetry can be pointed out for many poems, several exceptions should warn us not to overstate its significance, e.g. *Thebais* fr. 1 *PEG* (= *EGF*), Ἄργος ἄειδε, θεά, πολυδίψιον [...] opens a poem on Thebes, not Argos.

202 Cf. Hes. *Op*. 1 Μοῦσαι, *Th*. 1 Μουσάων, Arat. 1 ἐκ Διὸς.

203 See Magnelli 2006, 196–197.

204 This important textual relationship between the proems of the *Theriaca* and the *Works and Days*, and the thematic relevance of ῥεῖα is noticed by Fakas 2001, 63 n. 190.

205 For the significance of ῥεῖα denoting the ease with which gods are able to do all things easily in Homer see Griffin 1980 (188–190), who points at *Il*. 3.381 (of Aphrodite), 20.444 (of Apollo), 16.689 = 17.178 (of Zeus).

206 West 1966, 185. Other examples are Hes. *Th*. 438, 443, and Call. *Ap*. 50 (ῥεῖα κε in the same sedes) on which see Williams 1978, 50.

207 Unless one takes the opening word as a reference to the goddess Rhea, as Clauss (2006) suggests. I find this, however, implausible; see 194 n.

upon him, by showing his independence of divine inspiration of any kind.[208] Magnelli senses the irony involved in Nicander's use of ῥεῖα too: "nobody would believe that writing elegant hexameters on such an unfriendly matter and in such an abstruse style was an 'easy' task!"[209] The irony can perhaps even be interpreted as a form of playful arrogance, because even though Nicander must be perfectly aware of his poetical achievements, he is too vain to admit that the task performed was not an easy one.

### 5.4 *Bipartition*

As follows from the proem, the *Theriaca* purports to provide the necessary knowledge for countering the bites of poisonous animals. The latter category consists primarily of snakes, but also of venomous spiders, scorpions and various other creatures. The heterogeneity of the animals discussed allows for different types of categorisation, but despite the fact that more logical alternatives can be thought of, the poet has chosen to present his work in two parts. The first part (157–714)[210] is devoted to an extensive treatment of different sorts of snakes, whereas the second part (715–956) deals with the other animals.[211] Although the second part is much shorter than the first, and due to the many odd animals treated less coherent, the bipartite structure is unmistakable, as in both parts the catalogue of animals is followed by an extensive section on plants and recipes. Each part in turn thus consists of two parts: a first part on animals, and a complementary part on plants. The total of the two parts (each divided in two smaller parts) is framed by a proem and an epilogue. The

208 This view is corroborated by Nicander's similar use of ῥεῖα in *Al.* 4.

209 Magnelli 2006, 196–197.

210 For a slightly different division, with 145 as the opening of this part, see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 170. The discrepancy depends on whether 145–156 are part of the previous section (dealing with times and places when and where one needs to be particularly on one's guard) or whether these lines are the beginning of the new section, dealing with particular species of snakes.

211 According to some the *Theriaca* is divided according to the distinction between δακετά (animals inflicting harm by biting), which are discussed in the first part of the poem (*Ther.* 21 ff.), and βλητικά (animals that inflict harm by stinging), which are treated from *Ther.* 715 on; see Touwaide 1991, 69; Jacques 2002, lxxii. The distinction between δακετά and βλητικά goes back to Theophrastus (fr. 178.1; cf. D.L. 5.43)—unless [Arist.] fr. 7.41 is to be attributed to Aristotle and thus older—and appears to have become common knowledge, if we are to go by Apuleius' use of the distinction in *Apologia* 41.6. This division is, however, not entirely adhered to by Nicander, as some of the spiders treated are said to bite, not sting, e.g. βρυχμοῖσιν (716), ὀλοοῖς ὀδοῦσι (718), βρύξαντος (727), δάχμα (756).

remaining section (21–156) deals with precautions and techniques for preventing snakes to come near.

The bipartite structure of the *Theriaca* is not a random division. Here Nicander follows in the footsteps of Aratus, whose *Phaenomena* shows a similar division in two parts.[212] The first part (19–757, following the opening hymn in 1–18) is devoted to the actual *phaenomena*, i.e. the star signs and constellations. The second (and shorter) part (758–1141), the so-called *Diosemeia*, deals with weather signs.[213] The astronomical and meteorological parts thus complement each other with regard to their respective focuses on the high sky above, and on the earth and lower sky below.[214]

What gave Aratus the idea of composing his poem in two parts? In his thorough study Fakas has shown just how deeply Aratus is indebted to Hesiod, in particular to the *Works and Days*, to the extent that Fakas qualifies Aratus as 'the Hellenistic Hesiod'.[215] As Fakas points out, the analogies between Hesiod and Aratus are not just superficial, but show how Aratus deliberately tries to echo the different dimensions of the Hesiodic model, engaged in *mimesis* on a large scale.[216] One of the interesting aspects of his observations is the idea that the *Phaenomena* imitates the *Works and Days* with regard to its structure as well, following its bipartite nature.[217]

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212 *Pace* Gutzwiller (2007, 99) who states that "the *Phaenomena* falls into three major parts". Gutzwiller's division in a part on locating key stars, clusters and constellations, another part on sequences of constellations in the night sky, and a third part dealing with weather signs is not incorrect, but this tripartite division is surpassed by the more fundamental bipartite division between celestial signs and signs to be observed in nature.

213 Both Kidd and Martin (1998a, lxxii) consider the second part to begin at 758, contrary to the older opinion (found in e.g. Mair 1921, 262) that the *Diosemeia* start earlier, viz. in 733. For this confusion, dating back to antiquity, see Kidd 1997, 425. Erren (1967, 230–231, 241–242) suggests that the second part does start unofficially in 733, as the poet shifts from Eudoxus to ps.-Theophrastus here as his prose source.

214 The two parts of Aratus' poem even seem to rely on two different prose sources, Eudoxus' *Phaenomena* being responsible for the first part, whereas ps.-Theophrastus *De Signis* was consulted for the second part; see Kidd 1997, 14–23.

215 Cf. Fakas 2001, which main title is "Der hellenistische Hesiod".

216 See Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 224–227.

217 Fakas 2001, 67; Clauss 2006, 162 n. 7. The bipartite nature of the *Works and Days* is not unproblematic. Although it is recognised that the poem consists of two parts, different divisions have been proposed. In addition, it could be argued that its bipartition only applies to the parts to which the title *Works and Days* properly refers, consisting, of course, of a part known as *The Works*, and a second part known as *The Days*. The issues concern the beginning of the second part (after 286 or 383?), the status of the *Works* and the *Days* as two

Through this imitation of the archetypal didactic poem Aratus set the example for Nicander, who shows a similar interest in following Hesiod.[218] In the case of the *Theriaca*, we thus find a layered imitation, viz. of the *Works and Days*, of the *Phaenomena*, and of the *Works and Days* as perceived by Aratus in the *Phaenomena*. In his titling of the *Theriaca* Nicander seems to be imitating Aratus, by choosing for a neuter plural covering the contents of the entire poem, unlike the composite title of the *Works and Days*.

How is the bipartite structure of the *Theriaca* signposted in the poem itself? Contrary to our expectation, there is no formal proem to the second part. This is a marked difference from Aratus, who presents us with a clear proem in 758–777.[219] Moreover, the *Phaenomena*'s second proem is prepared by a transitional passage (733–757) dealing with the moon as a signifier of the months. As Fakas points out, this passage offers an intertextual nod to the *Works and Days*, and particularly to the beginning of the *Days*.[220] Although the second part of the *Theriaca* lacks a distinct proem, it does contain two significant programmatic 'hidden' markers, in the shape of the first word of the first two lines of the second part (*Ther.* 715–716):

> Ἔργα δέ τοι σίνταο περιφράζοιο φάλαγγος
> σήματά τ' ἐν βρυχμοῖσιν·

Here we find both the Hesiodic ἔργα and the Aratean σήματα neatly combined. Not only does ἔργα constitute part of the title of Hesiod's poem,[221] but it can

individual parts, the end of the poem, and whether or not it was followed by a 'third part'; see West 1978, 46, 126, 346–347, 364–365. It is, however, ultimately neither relevant in this context whether the title is original, nor whether the poem is transmitted in its original form. What matters is in which form the Alexandrians (who may have been responsible for its title) knew the poem, and whether *they* considered it to be bipartite. This is of course hard to prove; West (1978, 136) is quite convinced that the title Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι must already have been established by the time it entered the *Pinakes* of Callimachus in the third century BCE.

218 It is interesting that Parmenides' poem appears to have been bipartite as well, divided into a part on 'Being' (following the 'Way of Truth') and a part on 'Non-Being' (following the 'False Way'). Whether this structure is in any way indebted to Hesiod is impossible to say, based on our current knowledge of the poem.

219 Kidd 1997, 439.

220 Aratus' ἀεξομένοιο … | μηνός (734–735) echoes Hesiod's μηνός | … ἀεξομένοιο in 772–773; Fakas 2001, 68.

221 It is not known whether the poem was ever known simply as Ἔργα. Despite any lack of

well be considered a buzz-word in the *Works and Days*.[222] The same goes for σήματα which is found in many forms and shapes dozens of times throughout the *Phaenomena*.[223] Reference is thus not made directly to the bipartite structure of earlier poems, but to the bipartite poems of Nicander's main predecessors.

### 5.5 *Internal Structure*

So far we have seen the broad outline of the poem: two parts, each divided again in two parts, framed by a proem and an epilogue. Here we shall look at the smaller units that make up the *Theriaca*.

Effe, following Schneider, signals Nicander's unusual choice to deviate from what would have been the most logical procedure for the individual descriptions: (i) a description of the animal, followed by (ii) the symptoms of its bite, rounded off with (iii) recipes for proper cures.[224] Instead Nicander has chosen to separate the last category from the first two, and to bundle all cures in one large section on treatment (493–714). The same procedure is followed in the second part of the poem on other poisonous animals, where the treatment is again postponed to the end (837–956). As Effe points out, this is a radical decision that strongly diminishes the practicality of the poem's contents; this ought to be a sign in itself that applicability or practical use in general was not on the poet's mind when composing the *Theriaca*.

What is there to gain in altering the structure of the subject matter? According to Effe, Nicander's rearrangement prevents monotony, and allows for more diversity, and an aesthetically more accomplished work of art.[225] This is certainly true for the structure for the poem as a whole, which benefits from the

evidence West (1978, 136) seems sure that its entry in Callimachus' *Pinakes* was under the name Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι.

222 Ἔργα appears 20 times in the poem (including 6 declined plurals), in addition to 46 instances of cognate words, e.g. ἐργαζομένος in 309, ἀεργίη in 311; cf. 43–46, 302–316, 409–413, 438–444.

223 Cf. the many instances of σήματα (24, including two declined plurals) and cognates (34 instances, in addition to Διοσημεῖα) in the *Phaenomena*, e.g. 10, 168, 412, 433, 459–465, 565, 760, 772, 777, 805, 820, 837, 890, 906, 1037, 1040 etc.

224 Effe 1974a, 54; Schneider 1962, 36–37. We can of course surmise, but not be certain, that Nicander merely followed the original order of his prose source.

225 According to Schneider (1962, 37), the material is rearranged in order to scale it down as well, which is contradicted by Effe (1974a, 54 n. 3). Considering the considerable length of the result as it is known to us, scaling down does not seem to have had much priority for the poet.

necessary variation offered by the macro-structure. As for the internal structure there is a clear downside to Nicander's approach. Whereas the first half of each part (i.e. the sections on animals and bites) offers exciting reading material, rich in detail and horror, the second halves (i.e. the sections on plants and remedies) are less attractive, as they go on endlessly.[226] The same could of course be said about the sections on animals, but whereas a new animal raises new interest in the reader's mind, every new recipe is virtually the same. We should not forget, however, that their beauty does not lie in the information they contain, but in their descriptions, rich in periphrasis, poetical adjectives, the occasional mythological reference, and not least the poet's ability to fit all this material into pleasing hexameters.

### 5.6 *Anticipation and Interweaving*

An unobtrusive yet important narrative element employed by the poet is the use of anticipation. More than once a certain topic is mentioned casually, yet at the same time it prepares the reader for detailed treatment of that topic later in the poem. This is already found in the proem of the *Theriaca*. In the second part of the proem, the mythological transition (8–20), reference is made to spiders (φαλάγγια, 8), snakes/vipers (ἑρπηστὰς ἔχιάς τε, 9), and scorpions (σκορπίον, 14; σκορπίος, 18). While the proper proem (1–7) only mentions σίνη … θηρῶν (1) generally, the additional information in the second part of the proem alludes to the treatment of spiders, snakes, and scorpions later in the poem. The same technique is applied in 654, where a particular cure is said not only to be effective against vipers (ἐχίων ὀλοὸν σίνος, 653), but against scorpions and spiders as well (ἄλλοτε τύμμα | σκοπιόεν, τοτὲ δάχματ' … φάλαγγος, 653–654), looking forward to the shift from snakes to scorpions and spiders in the second part of the poem.

Not only the treatment of animals is heralded in the proem. Treatment of the proper curative plants and recipes is anticipated in *Ther.* 2, where the poet announces that he will give us λύσιν θ' ἑτεραλκέα κήδευς, 'a countering remedy for the harm'. These remedies do not follow until 493 ff., nearly five hundred lines after their initial announcement. Yet the anticipation that follows from the proem warrants that even a topic that has been postponed for such a long

226 An analysis of the micro-structure of the poem is given by Effe (1974a, 53–62). He signals a clear balance between smaller units, based on contrasts between pairs or groups of snakes (e.g. dangerous/not dangerous, similar/dissimilar motion, more/less attention to appearance in relation to the treatment of symptoms etc.). Despite his insightful approach, I am not convinced that this was always the author's intention, particularly as this sometimes strained structure is not likely to be easily picked up by the reader.

time does not come as a surprise. Anticipations, and their resumptions later on, thus create a framework of interwoven elements. This interweaving not only applies to formal announcements of elements to be treated later on, but also comprises recurring elements that give a sense of coherence to the poem. Thus we find several elements discussed or referred to multiple times. The element of chilblains is treated in 382 (μάλκαι), but recurs in 682 (χίμετλα). The information that the blows of the female viper are more dangerous than those of the male is found in 129, but also in 517. The danger of snakes hiding near threshing-floors comes up in 29, in 114, and again in 546. The risk of snake-assaults during sleep in the open is mentioned not only in 23–25, but also in 309–315, and again in 546. The poet's fascination for the sloughing of snakes is first seen in 31, and recurs in 137 and 358. In this way the internal structure of the poem is corroborated, and consequently the *Theriaca* becomes more than a mere list. Moreover, by means of interweaving, in combination with anticipatory remarks, Nicander reminds us of Hesiod, who takes a similar approach in the *Works and Days*.[227]

### 5.7 *Pseudo-Associative Composition*

In narrative epic the flow of the poem is for the largest part dictated by the events of the story, or stories. Although the narrator has many tools at hand to shift focus, stretch time, leave out certain details, and manipulate his material in order to suit his needs, the reader still knows how the story goes, particularly if the plot, the characters and the outcome of these stories are known to the audience in advance, which is generally the case with myths. By comparison, the didactic poet cannot follow a story line, and although he can introduce narrative passages into his work, the main material of his composition requires a sharp memory of all the things he wanted to convey when he first ventured on his poem.[228]

As has been observed for Hesiod, this is, at least partly, achieved through association. The poet segues from one topic to another because of a common trait, not because the next topic follows automatically, or logically, from the pre-

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227 For the ideas of anticipation and interweaving as a means of attaining internal structural coherence in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, see Lardinois 1998.

228 For the 'continuous style', deliberately lacking clear distinctions between main and side issues, as a trait of archaic poetry in general see Fränkel (1962, 593–594), "in gleitendem Übergang wechselt man allmählich von einem zum andern hinüber, und es gibt keinen bestimmten Punkt an dem das Vorige den Gesichtskreis verläßt und das Neue allein vor Augen zu stehen beginnt."

vious one.[229] In his study of Aratus' extensive *mimesis* of Hesiod, Fakas signals the same procedure in the *Phaenomena*: the poet essentially follows the logical order of treatment set out by the night sky, but whenever interesting details come to the poet's mind, they are presented then and there.[230] The result is a poem that shows a natural, unobtrusive fluency, characteristic—and thus reminiscent—of Hesiodic poetry. Aratus gives the impression he is virtually composing extempore, musing along as he is gazing at the nightly sky, without following a coercive plan.[231]

This is of course not really the case. Just like his Alexandrian peers, Aratus does not write impromptu poetry, but must have studied his sources while following them in his own version of the treatment of the stars.[232] Even if he deviates from Eudoxus, this is a deliberate choice, based on poetic considerations. The choice to proceed with a new passage is not a matter of association, but of careful planning and elaborate matching. Yet Aratus, posing as a naive poet, makes an effort to give the impression his poetry is composed in a way similar to Hesiod's. This technique has been labelled the 'associative principle of composition' by Fakas, who considers this feature of the *Phaenomena* to be one of Aratus' main tools in imitating his archaic example.[233]

What about Nicander? This associative principle of composition, which should perhaps be labelled 'pseudo-associative' in the case of the learned Hellenistic imitators, is clearly found in the *Theriaca* as well. At the start of

229 Whether we find genuine examples of associative composition in Hesiod, or are merely given the impression of association as a principle of composition is a point of discussion; see Verdenius 1960, 345–352 and 1962, 156; Rowe 1983, 134. For references to contrasting views see Fakas 2001, 73. It is, however, ultimately irrelevant if Hesiod's approach to composition is really associative. What matters to us is the impression Hesiod made on Aratus. The latter's *mimesis* shows how he read Hesiod, which is not necessarily how we read the *Works and Days*.

230 E.g. the excursus in Arat. 96–136, 287–299, 634–646.

231 The same idea is conveyed in Call. fr. 1 Harder, where we read that Apollo told Callimachus to abandon preconceived plans, and to venture upon a new, unknown road. The encounter with the Muses too shows Callimachus shaping his poem along the way, progressing from question to question.

232 This clearly follows from Callimachus' famous epigram in which Aratus' achievement is praised. In *AP* 9.507 (*HE* 56 = 27.4 Pf.) the realisation of the *Phaenomena* is called Ἀρήτου σύμβολον ἀγρυπνίης, "token of Aratus' vigilance", (transl. Nisetich). The ἀγρυπνίη ('sleeplessness') is of course due to poring over Eudoxus' writings, and polishing his own poetry, rather than due to nights spent looking at the sky itself, as Callimachus' pun intends. See Gow & Page 1965b, 209.

233 Fakas 2001, 72–77.

the actual didactic part (21) the poet tells us how to dispel snakes when one wants to sleep in the afternoon on a hot summer day. This is followed by a topic on precautions to take when one wants to sleep at night in the open (57–60); through association of 'sleep' Nicander proceeds from afternoon to evening. In 98 the teacher tells his pupil to catch coupling snakes at a crossroads, a spot that Nicander brings up again in 128, as if there was something else to say about a crossroads. In 258 a transition is made from the male viper (which he has just treated) to the *cerastes* 'who attacks like the male viper, which he resembles in equality of size'. The double similarity between the two snakes causes the poet to treat the *cerastes* next, through the association with the viper. The *cerastes*' crooked movement (267) inspires the poet to treat the *haemorrhois* next, who moves in the same halting way 'as the *cerastes*' (294). After the digression on the aetiology of the *haemorrhois*, the poet proceeds with the *sepedon*, 'who resembles the *haemorrhois* in certain ways'. The treatment of the *amphisbaena* (372–383) includes a reference to the conventional practice of stripping the snake of its skin, in order to use it medicinally for treating chilblains. This is done when the snake first appears in spring. The treatment of the next snake, the *scytale*, induces the poet to bring up its appearance in spring, followed by some information on the development of the snake's skin early in the season; the stripping of the skin of the previous snake has led the poet to the topic of the skin's creation of the next. This list may not be exhaustive, but it shows how the poet operates through association, or at least this is what he wants his audience to think.

An interesting variant of the associative listing just described is found in 458 ff. Line 457 closes off a passage on the perennial battle between the dragon and the eagle. Before proceeding with the next animal, the poet starts with a topographical overview of the region of Thrace. Here Nicander's topographic description resembles the bird's-eye view of the eagle just described. It is as if the poet zooms in on a map, starting with easily recognisable large objects in the sea (the isles of Lemnos and Samothrace, the Thracian Gulf), then moves to easily recognisable large objects on land (the river Hebrus, the mountain of Zone), but concludes with objects that can only be recognised from a shorter distance (the oaks of Orpheus, the cave of the *cenchrines*). Thus the poet's overview seems to follow from his description of the eagle, hovering in the sky, and looking down on his opponent, the dragon.

On another level we find a similar associative principle. This is particularly the case in the treatments of recipes. The poet often gives the impression that another ingredient, herb or plant has just occurred to him, and needs to be added straightaway. This 'threading style' seems to be underlined by lexical markers, for example in the poet's frequent use of ναὶ μήν to create a sense

of associative composition.[234] In reality, of course, he knows well in advance which method is to be treated next, particularly if Nicander is following the information from his prose source(s). Yet the fictional associative composition functions as a means of creating the impression of authenticity and of live speech.

### 5.8 *Digressions and Counterparts*

Apart from the mythological transition (8–20) following the proem, the *Theriaca* contains eleven digressions, dispersed throughout the poem. Because of the relative monotony of the catalogue pattern used by the poet, these digressions, despite their brevity, clearly stand out as pauses from the regular listings, providing the external addressee with the necessary diversion. They can be divided into two categories: mythological excursuses, usually of an aetiological nature, and excursuses dealing with particular animals, other than the usual descriptions of poisonous creatures. In addition we find quite a few instances where the poet briefly adds a mythological detail to his description, without adding any narrative elements.[235] Considering the brevity of most of such elaborations in the *Theriaca*, the difference between a 'proper' digression and a mere reference to a particular myth, should not be considered hard and fast.

Within the first, mythological, category the following digressions can be discerned: (i) 309–319: the sojourn of Menelaus' crew in the Egyptian delta, including the aetiology of the crooked movement of the *cerastes*-snake; (ii) 343–358: Zeus, Prometheus, the gift of Youth, and a multiple aetiology triggered by the *dipsas* or 'thirst'-snake; (iii) 483–487: the visit of the grieving Demeter to the house of Celeüs and Metaneira, followed by the metamorphosis of the boy Ascalabus into a gecko; (iv) 541–549: the accidental discovery of a curative herb by Alcibius;[236] (v) 666–675: a second accidental discovery of a curative herb by Alcibius; (vi) 686–688: Paieon's healing of Iphicles, who got wounded when aiding Heracles in the slaying of the Hydra; (vii) 901–906: the death

234 At line-opening in *Ther.* 66, 76, 145, 334, 520, 822, 863, 896, 921 and *Al.* 64, 178, 554 and 584. This highly Nicandrean combination hardly ever occurs elsewhere; see 51 n. in the commentary.

235 E.g. *Ther.* 230, 438–440, 458–462, 500–502, 608, 613, 627, 679, 764, 835.

236 Alcibius is not known from any other source, and does not seem to have played a part in Greek mythology. I include him into the category of mythological digressions for practical reasons, since he shares features with other characters as being a *primus inventor* (see section 8.3), and plays a role in Nicander's aetiologies comparable to his 'proper' mythological characters.

of Narcissus, accidentally caused by Apollo during a playful game of discus throwing; (viii) 835–836: the death of Odysseus as caused by the venomous sting of the stingray. Interestingly all myths have to do with either loss (of life, of Youth, of humanness), or discovery (Alcibius' herbs, the herb found by Paieon). As such they reflect the teacher's intentions: learning new ways to prevent losing one's life.

The second category, dealing with animals, contains the following digressions: (ix) 190–208: the battle of the *ichneumon* (mongoose) and the asp; (x) 448–457: the battle of the dragon and the eagle; (xi) 566–571: the Egyptian habitat of the river-horse.

What is the relevance of these digressions within the *Theriaca*? As already mentioned, they offer a break from the sometimes tedious successions of snakes and plants.[237] Such breaks are formally addressed to the 'general you', being the internal addressee, but it is obvious that decorative passages like these are also aimed at the external addressee. They do not offer useful, let alone practical, information to the pupil, although they do offer the internal addressee a pleasant break. To the external addressee, who is not concerned with all of Nicander's detailed listings, they are welcome distractions as well, imaginative pictures presented by the poet. The digressions are scattered more or less evenly throughout the poem. The only large gap is found between 688 and 901, but if we consider the shift in 715 from the part on plants to the part on 'other poisonous creatures', a varied category in itself, there is less need for a digression in order to add variation in this part of the poem.

In addition to creating variety of form, digressions can add to the overall balance of the poem. This has been observed by Effe, who points at the balance created by two contrasting pairs of animal digressions. The first, in which we are presented the battle between the ichneumon and the asp, finds its counterpart in a similar battle, between the dragon and the eagle.[238] The similarity of the two scenes is playfully contrasted by their contents, as the first takes place in a river, and the second in the air: these extensions to the territories where the snake is least comfortable underline, by contrast, its power on land, and consequently its danger to man.

Another counterpart is found in the double digression on Alcibius, who is twice credited for the serendipitous discovery of a curative herb. Just like the

237 This is clearly felt towards the end of the *Theriaca*. The last part (on curative plants and recipes), which is all but devoid of digressions, is also the least attractive part of the poem, lacking the necessary narratorial or presentational variation.

238 See Effe 1974a, 58.

two battles give balance to the part on snakes (157–492), the two discoveries of Alcibius create balance in the complementary part on curative recipes (493–714).[239] What is interesting, moreover, is their relative positions within their parts. The first battle starts in *Ther.* 200, i.e. 43 lines after the opening in 157. The second battle starts in *Ther.* 448, 44 lines before the end of this part in 492. A similar distribution is found in the case of Alcibius: the first tale of discovery starts in *Ther.* 541, i.e. 48 lines after the start of the part on herbs in 493, the second tale of discovery starts in 666, i.e. 48 lines before the end of the part on herbs in 714. In both cases (or in both parts) the positioning of the two counterparts is not random, but part of the composition. Their placement should be considered a mesostructural refinement, on top of the common partition by means of digressions.[240] Moreover, these counterparts on a mesostructural level reflect the *Theriaca* as a whole, as it consists of counterparts itself. The two complementary parts on snakes and other poisonous creatures are both contrasted and interlocked by the two complementary parts on curative herbs and recipes.

### 5.9 *Structuring Devices: Acrostic and* Sphragis

Next to the digressions, which add to the poem's segmentation, in addition to the intrinsic division following the poem's contents, the poet makes uses of different markers, such as the acrostic in 345–353, the *sphragis* in 957–958, and lexical markers (see section 5.7) that help to shape the poem's form. The acrostic and the *sphragis* contained in the *Theriaca* serve several purposes, but can be considered relevant to the poem's structure as well, hence their treatment in this chapter.

Since it was first noticed by Lobel in 1928 the acrostic, consisting of the poet's name, has received much attention.[241] For those aware of its existence it is a nicety that is easily recognisable, evident, playful, and as there can be no doubt about its validity it is one of the few elements of the poem about which there

239 For another interesting counterpart cf. Canobus (312–315) and Alcibius (541–549): both are bitten by snakes, but whereas Canobus dies, Alcibius lives due to his application of a herbal treatment. This makes the latter a positive example of countering snakes by means of recipes, as opposed to Canobus, who lacks the sort of knowledge the poet has to offer, and consequently dies.

240 For this reason I disagree with Jacques' relocation of 541–556 as a section between 508–509. See 509–519 n. in the commentary and Overduin 2013.

241 Lobel 1928, 114–115. For a general overview of acrostics in antiquity see Vogt 1967, Courtney 1990, Damschen 2004. For acrostic verse inscriptions see Garulli 2013 and Mairs 2013.

can be little uncertainty.[242] Yet the acrostic is not a mere *paignion*, a playful testimony of the poet's vanity.[243] It is not randomly inserted into the poem, but, as Hopkinson points out, in "the most elaborate passage of the whole poem".[244] As such the acrostic, whether noticed or not by the reader, functions as a structural marker, rather than merely being there for its own sake. But apart from its function as a pointer to what is—arguably—the poem's central story, the acrostic has more to tell.

First it can be considered a recognition of Aratus' use of acrostics in the *Phaenomena*, and at the same time a reaction to it.[245] It is noticable that the acrostic, little known in earlier Greek poetry, makes an appearance in the *Phaenomena*, to be followed by the next famous didactic poet in line, who happens to be a follower of Aratus in many other respects as well.[246] Self-consciously Nicander decides to leave the realm of literary (ΛΕΠΤΗ) or contextually (ΠΑΣΑ, ΜΕΣΗ) relevant terms to his predecessor, and chooses to incorporate his own name into his work, capping Aratus by using a perhaps less interesting, but more marked acrostic.[247] At the same time Nicander's 'hidden' signature seems to play on Aratus' concealed name, viz. the self-reference

242 Cf. the problematic acrostic σIKϰNΔΡΟΣ in *Al.* 266–274; Lobel 1928, 114–115. Damschen's attempt to read ΡΑΦΕ ΒΗΤΑ (a combination fortuitously present as an acrostic in *Ther.* 1–8), implying that the poem as transmitted is the second book of a larger unit, is entirely unconvincing; Damschen 2004, 92, n. 9.

243 For the common functions of acrostics, viz. additional information for the reader to the work in question, prevention of forgery, addition or deletion of lines, mnemotechnical purposes, or embellishment see Damschen 2004, 91–93.

244 Hopkinson 1988, 143.

245 For acrostics in Aratus, most notably ΛΕΠΤΗ in 783–787 (a reaction to ΛΕΥΚΗ in *Il.* 24.1–5?), ΠΑΣΑ in 803–806 (a gamma-acrostic), and the syllable acrostic ΜΕ-ΣΗ in 807–808, see Jacques 1960, 50; Levitan 1979, 75; Haslam 1992, 201. Other suggestions (ΕΠΑΘΕ in 220–224, ΣΕΜΕΙΗ in 810–812, ΗΧΗ in 949–951, and the telestichon ΙΣΗ in 234–236) are less convincing; see Levitan 1979, 57–58; Cusset 1995; Fakas 1999; Danielewicz 2005, 325–326. Moreover, Fakas (1999, 358 n. 10) noticed the telestichon ΑΙΑ in *Al.* 268–271, matching with αἶα at line-end in 271, thus resulting in a mirrored gamma-acrostic. Although the chance of coincidence is not slight in the case of such a short word, the telestichon does reflect Aratus's use of a gamma-acrostic in 803–806.

246 For the few known instances in Greek of acrostics prior to Aratus see e.g. Cameron 1995, 38; Damschen 2004, 92 n. 9.

247 As Cameron (1995, 37) rightly points out, there is nothing artful or complex per se in producing an acrostic. Acrostics can, however, become literary relevant when their contents are e.g. programmatic, or when they interact with other texts.

contained in the word ἄρρητον (*Phaen.* 2).[248] Instead of playing on inserting one's name 'unnamed' like Aratus does, Nicander conversely gives his name in full, clear to see for those who know where to look.

The *sphragis*, apart from being the second attestation of the poet's name within the *Theriaca*, clearly marks the poem's end. A shift is made from the internal teacher to the level of the implied author, who speaks to us as a poet, contemplating on the work just presented; the address is no longer to Hermesianax, the internal addressee, but to the external addressee, viz. the readers. To be sure, this is not a feature of the *sphragis* itself, qua *sphragis*, but of the way the poet has chosen to merge the inclusion of a *sphragis* with his 'narratorial' shift, which in turn is merged with the end of the poem; cf. Introduction 4.4. This is a marked break with both Hesiod and Aratus, as neither of Nicander's main predecessors are very outspoken in the conclusion of their works.[249] Particularly the end of the *Phaenomena* (1153–1154) strikes us as abrupt: "If you have watched for these signs all together for the year, you will never make an uninformed judgement on the evidence of the sky"; transl. Kidd.[250] Admittedly, it is not shorter than Nicander's brief epilogue, but whereas Nicander's *sphragis*, abrupt as it may come, clearly signals that we have reached the end of the poem, Aratus' less personal stance is devoid of any impression that we have reached the end of the poem.[251]

### 5.10 *Lexical Structural Markers*

In addition to the marked division of the poem's contents, the digressions, the acrostic and the *sphragis*, the poem's internal structure can be analysed by means of lexical markers. These can be divided into (i) particles and particle combinations at line-opening, and (ii) declarative first-person future verbs and second-person imperative verbs. In the first category we find the combination εἴ γε or εἰ δέ, used as a means of opening a new section. It is always found at the opening of the line (thus at the outset of the section), and is used for this

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248 Levitan 1979, 68 n. 18; Kidd 1981, 355; 1997, 164; Bing 1990, 281–285. See also Cameron 1995, 321–322.

249 The case of the *Works and Days* is of course problematic, considering the possible discrepancy with the poem's original end, and the end known to us through the manuscript tradition.

250 Τῶν ἄμυδις πάντων ἐσκεμμένος εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν | οὐδέποτε σχεδίως κεν ἐπ' αἰθέρι τεκμήραιο.

251 Unmarked or at least brief and sudden conclusions of epic poems may have been fashionable in Hellenistic poetry, cf. the odd end of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, and of Moschus' *Europa*. For the question whether the latter is incomplete see Hopkinson 1988, 214–215.

purpose only.[252] This works particularly well in 57, 80, 87, 98 and 115, where the particle combination is effectively used to string together similar sections. The same role, though less prominent, is played by ἀλλ' ἤτοι, which is found at line-opening in 8, 121 and 620. Here too we find that the combination ἀλλ' ἤτοι is used exclusively as a structural marker, introducing a new section. Unlike ἤτοι, used very frequently throughout the poem, in the *Theriaca* the combination ἀλλ' ἤτοι is not used in any other way. A third combination that clearly functions as a section marker is νῦν δ' ἄγε (τοι), used in 359, 528 and 636 to herald a shift of topic. To add a fourth type of marker, on another level we find the highly frequent use of the disjunctive particle ἤ (or ἠέ), occurring 49 times as the first word of the line in the *Theriaca*: one in every twenty-odd lines thus starts with ἤ, not counting all the instances of ἤ in other *sedes*. Although this may seem not surprising considering the catalogue nature of Nicander's listings, Aratus, by comparison, only uses ἤ (ἠμέν, ἠδέ) five times at line-opening, not even a tenth of Nicander's frequency. The even lower frequency in the *Works and Days* (only two instances, 339, 775) shows that this is not a feature of didactic poetry; it is, however, characteristic of catalogue poetry, as follows from the frequent use of ἠ' οἵη in the *Catalogue of Women*. Conversely, that the use of ἤ as a structuring device at line-opening is a particularly Nicandrean feature is confirmed by the *Alexipharmaca*, where we find the same high frequency (29 instances; one in every twenty-two-odd lines starts with ἤ). It is interesting that in Nicander ἤ is always used as a marker of alternatives *within* sections; the only instance of ἤ (c.q. ἦε) as the introductory marker of a *new* section is 557.

The second category of markers consists of the frequent use of 'didactic verbs' providing structure to the poem. Although such verbs are used throughout the poem, and do not necessarily function as clear markers, it is interesting that they often occur at significant points, viz. at the opening of a new section.[253] Thus we find ἐνίψω (282) at the opening of the section on the *haemorrhoos*-snake, διείσομαι (494) opening the first large part on remedies, or λέξω (528) introducing a section on compound remedies.[254] Next to these first-person future verbs, the poet often employs second-person verbs, though not often with future tense. Here too we discern a marked use at the outset of every new section: δήεις (100, 373, 384, 714), (περι)φράζεο (157, 438, 541, 589, 656, 715, 759), εἴρεο (359), τεκμαίρευ (396), and πιφαύσκεο (411, 725).[255] Although

252 This occurs in *Ther*. 57, 80, 87, 98, 115, 458, 689, 747, 769, 848, and 885.

253 See also 209 n. in the commentary.

254 Cf. ἐρέω (636), αὐδήσω (770), διείσομαι (837), and οἶδα (805, 811).

255 Cf. σύ … | … διώξεαι (21–22), εὖ δ' ἄν … ἴδοις (209), εὖ δ' ἄν … μάθοις (258), εὖ δ' ἄν … γνοίης

such verbs are not used exclusively as section markers, their frequent presence at the beginning of new sections does contribute to a mesostructural sense of division within the poem.

### 5.11 *Conclusion*

As follows from the previous sections Nicander has paid attention to ample details in his presentation of the *Theriaca*. Many of these, such as the mythological part of the proem, the carefully balanced fights between the eagle and the viper and the viper and the mongoose, the remarkable proem, the division in two parts, the attention paid to anticipation, the technique of interweaving, and the digressions, show the poet's wish to create a work that is valued as a work of literature. Few of the elements described here would be expected, or even welcome in a work whose primary aim is to convey information in a neat and straightforward manner. Rather than presenting a practical account in which single snakes are coupled with single treatments the poet has sought to create variation and diversity by carefully arranging his material.

## 6 Language and Metre

The peculiar diction of the *Theriaca* is one of its most striking features. As such, its language has been subject of modern research much more intensive than its narrative, didactic, intertextual or Alexandrian dimensions. In this chapter Nicander's language will be treated broadly, dealing with its most noticeable characteristics, primarily from the viewpoint of its literary aspects, such as innovation and imitation of traditional elements.[256] The overall picture thus emerging is that of a poet whose interest is firmly rooted in the tradition of epic with its many archaic characteristics. We see a poet who is almost incessantly trying to construct phrases with a clear epic ring, coinages that draw the reader's attention, *hapax legomena* that challenge the connoisseurs of Homer, and lofty adjectives, often coined for the occasion. One does not need to be very familiar with the contents of the *Theriaca* to get an idea of the nature of the poem. A glance at its idiom and style immediately make clear that we see the hand of a learned poet; neither vocabulary nor style gives the

(320), μηδέ … ἐπιλήθεο (574), πεύθεο (700) etc.

256 A detailed study of Nicander's language in the *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca* was published in 1898 by Klauser. His focus is on Nicander's use of particles, adverbs, conjunctions and pronouns.

impression of a treatise on snakebites. What we see is a poet who is interested in poetic diction and literary play; the contents, be it biology or medicine, are much less prominent, and (to a certain extent) of little relevance to the poet's literary aims.[257]

### 6.1 *The Language of Epic*

In general, Nicander adheres to what has been coined the *Kunstsprache* of epic: an amalgam of different dialects, dominated by Ionic, with ample instances of metrical lengthening, archaisms, and other words, forms and endings from different periods.[258]

It is this epic language, with its grandeur, lofty compounds, artificiality, and variety that is imitated by the Alexandrian poets in general and Nicander is no exception here.[259] It is of course necessary to distinguish between Homer and his late imitators: whereas in Homer's time the language of epic—artificial though it may have been—was widely recognised and understood as traditional, the Alexandrians, consciously attempting to revive the language of Homer in their hexameters, achieved a new level of artificiality, presenting their deliberately sought after rarities to an audience for whom knowledge of the archaic language was no longer a second nature. Moreover, within their poetry, they played on alternative meanings of rare or even unique words, pushing the artificiality of their language to its limits. Whereas to Homer and the poets of his day these artificial forms where mere building blocks used for the construction of poetry, many Hellenistic poets seem to have been very much aware of every single word they wrote.[260]

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257 Although the poem's language is evidently of a highly poetic nature, of late some scholars have pointed at striking parallels between the language and style of Nicander and the language and style found in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*; see Oikonomakos 1999, De Stefani 2006a. These similarities, which find corroboration in the fact that Nicander wrote a paraphrase of pseudo-Hippocrates' *Prognostica* (see section 2.3), show that Nicander's diction is not merely an adaptation of epic, but a complex amalgam of Homeric, Hesiodic and Alexandrian influences, enriched with occasional words from tragedy, medical-technical terms etc. This last category will, however, not receive in-depth treatment in this chapter, as my focus is primarily on literary elements.

258 The Homeric *Kunstsprache* has been subject of many studies. An up-to-date overview (with references) is found in Wachter (2000, 61–108).

259 For a comprehensive study of Nicander's borrowing of Homeric adjectives and nouns see Ritter 1880. For Nicander's Homeric style see Volkmann 1854, 47–55; Klauser 1898, 1–92; Crugnola 1961, 119–152; Schneider 1962 *passim*; Touwaide 1991, 79–82.

260 See Heubeck et al. 1988, 24.

Although Nicander basically follows Homer's language, occasionally we come across some dialect forms not found in Homer.[261] The scholia signal the use of forms peculiar to Aetolia such as ὑπάρπεζον (284) and πολυδευκέος (625), which is a Homerism, but used by Nicander with its Aetolian meaning (viz. 'sweet'). Nicander's use of ὀδελός for ὀβελός is said to be either a Doric or an Aeolic form. The plural dative ὑδάτεσσι (665) is a post-Homeric Aeolicism (probably picked up from Apollonius or Aratus), and παός (παῶν in 3) is Doric for the Homeric πηός. In 729 the Aeolic-Doric πεδάορος (for the Homeric μετήορος) is interestingly given an Ionic touch, presented as πεδήορος; ὄθμα in 178 is an Aeolicism according to Hesychius, although Nicander may be indulging in a pseudo-archaism here. In addition we find a few instances of -ευ-, being the contracted variant of -εο- / -εω-, common in Doric and some other dialects, e.g. κήδευς (2), ἀρότρευς (4), λίπευς (592). But such variants are all minor divergences from an otherwise predominantly Homeric diction.

### 6.2 *Lexical Innovation*

Although other Hellenistic poets, particularly Callimachus and Apollonius, are known to have introduced new words into their poetic language, Nicander's indulgence in the formation of new words, conjoining regular (verbal) stems with unusual suffixes, or creating unexpected compounds, appears to be more intrusive.[262] It is of course impossible to tell whether Nicander is truly original in any of his formations, or whether his ostensible coinages are not merely borrowings from poems no longer known to us. This should warn us against bold conclusions about Nicander's originality based on our extant 'evidence'. Yet the denial of any originality of Nicander's material known to us does not seem to do justice to his poetry. Prudent though we need to be, ignoring this element of Nicander's poetics would diminish the overal assessment of his work.

Nicander's interest in coinages results in a high amount of words that are easily understandable, yet unique. To name just a few, the noun τύψις (921, 933), apparently a lexical variant of τύμμα ('blow', 'wound', 426, 737, 919, 930) is not found before Nicander. It is used next to the Homeric cognate τυπή (129, 358, 673, 784) in order to create a range of archaic, common and coined variants of nouns reflecting the result of τύπτω. In the same way δάχμα (e.g. 119, 128) occurs as a newly formed variant of the existing δῆγμα (δάκνω). Often the coinage lacks

261 Excluding of course Homeric Aeolicisms such as πίσυρες (*Ther.* 182, 710) for τέτταρες. For the ostensibly Laconic form φιν see 725 n. in the commentary.

262 For Apollonius' use of such coinages see Redondo 2000, 135 ff. Newly formed compound adjectives are also frequent in Lycophron.

such a variant noun, and the meaning of the new word has to be gathered from a verb or adverb of the same root, e.g. φύρμα (723), νύχμα (e.g. 271, 298), βρύχμα (362), βρύγμα (483). Less elaborate but still distinct are nouns in -ειον as coined by Nicander. Thus we find e.g. πετάλειον for πέταλον (638), σπερμεῖον for σπέρμα (599, 894, 900, 944),[263] δαυκεῖον for δαῦκος (858, 939), χαράδρειον for χαράδρα (389).[264] In the category of adverbs we find some coinages as well, particularly those in -ην, of which Nicander seems to be quite fond: φύγδην (21), ἀμμίγδην (41, 93, 912), συμφύρδην (110), λοχάδην (125), ποιφύγδην (371), ἐπιδρομάδην (481) and συμμίγδην (677) do not occur before Nicander. In addition we find some other adverbs not found in earlier poetry: οἰαδόν (148), ἄμυξ (131), and the simple μίξ (615).

In the category of coined adjectives we find a large group based on the suffix -όεις, a type which seems to have pleased Nicander particularly.[265] Thus in the *Theriaca* we find e.g. καχρυόεις (40), μυλόεις (91), ὑποσκιόεις (96), θρυόεις (200), εἱλικόεις (201), βρυόεις (208, 893, cf. *Al.* 371, 478), ὀργυιόεις (216), μυδόεις (308, 362), ὑποζοφόεις (337), and ζοφόεις (775, cf. *Al.* 474).[266] Adjectives in -ήεις seem to have been favourite too, e.g. ἀλθήεις (84), ἀμυδρήεις (274), τραπεζήεις (526), ὁλκήεις (651, 908), πισσήεις (717).[267] Also worth mentioning is Nicander's fondness of compound adjectives with the prefix πο(υ)λυ–.[268] This yields: πολυγλώχις (36), πουλυόδους (Ionic; 53), πολυαύξης (73, 596), πολύθριπτος (104), πολύστροιβος (310), πολύστρεπτος (480), πολυκήριος (798), πολύγουνος (872), πολύχνοος (875), and πουλύγονος (901).[269] See also section 5.4 on *hapax legomena*.

An interesting innovation too is Nicander's use of the feminine adjective παυράς, (with a genitive παυράδος), a creation analogous to θουράς, as used by Lycophron (612) and Nicander (131) as the otherwise unattested feminine of θοῦρος. No feminine form of παῦρος existed, which led Nicander to his inno-

263 In addition to σπέραδος in 649.

264 Cf. πτορθεῖον for πτόρθος (*Al.* 467); see also 628 n. in the commentary.

265 For Nicander's use of adjectives in -εις see Bartalucci 1963. Of the ca. 225 Greek adjectives in -όεις listed by Buck and Petersen (1954, 462–463), no less than 54 different adjectives appear in the Nicandrean corpus (including five instances of a v.l.).

266 For the possible origin of such adjectives in Nicander see section 6.5.

267 Of the c. 160 adjectives in -ήεις (including -ᾱεις) listed by Buck and Petersen (1954, 461–462), 30 different adjectives are found in the Nicandrean corpus.

268 In fact Nicander has a strong preference for compound adjectives in general, both traditional/epic and coined, as such compounds generally reflect a higher level of sophistication and elaborateness.

269 Perhaps influenced by Aratus' coinages πολυγλαγέος (1100) and πολυρροθίος (412); see Kidd 1997, 24.

vative creation. Similarly Nicander coins κιρράς, -άδος as the feminine of the masculine adjective κιρρός ('tawny').[270]

A special category consists of adjectives coined from the names of flowers and plants. These serve to create periphrastic variations in what otherwise could be tedious enumerations. Thus instead of κόνυζα ('fleabane') we find κονυζῆεν φυτόν, with a newly formed adjective. Instead of θρίδαξ ('lettuce') we find θριδακηΐδα … χαίτην, 'lettuce-like leaves' instead in 838, a trick used earlier in 65 (ὀριγανόεσσά τε χαίτη for ὀρίγανον) and 503 (ἀμαρακόεσσα … χαίτη for ἀμάρακον). In 860 we find περιστερόεντα πέτηλα ('vervainous leaves'), again presenting a coined adjective to create variation in endless lists of nouns of plants.

Related is the category of adjectives coined to describe particular features of certain plants, e.g. περιβρυής ('very luxuriant', 531, 841), ἀκανθοβόλος ('prickly', 542), πανακαρπής ('all-barren', 612), ἀκανθήεις ('thorny', 638), ἀνθήεις ('abounding in flowers', 645), μεσόχλοος ('greenish', 753), ὀρμεννόεις ('long-stalked', 840), ἀειβρυής ('ever-sprouting', 848), ἀθερηΐς ('prickly', 849), καχρυφόρος ('bearing the fruit of incense', 850), λεπτόθριος ('with fine leaves', 875), ἀμυγδαλόεις ('almond-like', 891), ἐύρρηχος ('very prickly', 868), θαμνῖτις ('shrubby', 883).

Nicander's reputation of being an obscure poet is partly due to the fact that he frequently resorts to coinages of his liking. Although this can of course be explained partly by pointing at prosodic necessity, this argument cannot explain for all of his creations. What we can conclude is that lexical innovation is an integral and essential feature of Nicander's poetic language.

### 6.3 (*Pseudo-*)*Archaic Elements*

The bulk of the 'Homeric' material within the *Theriaca* consists of idiom borrowed from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Just like the Alexandrian poets before him, Nicander harvested the epics in order to create his own archaic language. Yet a small but distinct category within Nicander's diction consists of forms that only appear to be archaic. Such forms are not evidently taken from older texts, but merely give the impression of being archaic. Here we see the sophistication of the poet, deliberately adding a touch of patina to his diction, in order to sound like his archaic compeers and their pre-Nicandrean Alexandrian imitators alike. Although in this use Nicander is not unique (Apollonius and Callimachus come to mind) it is a marked feature of his language nonetheless.

270 Cf. also Nicander's uncommon use of gender, turning masculine nouns into feminine ones and vice versa, or using male endings for feminine nouns. See notes on 30, 55, 60, 590 in the commentary.

First there is the use of the archaic suffix -φι, in Homer and Hesiod functioning as a relic of the older instrumental, locative or ablative case. This suffix does not occur in the classical period as an alternative to the genitive or dative case, and later occurrences are mainly Hellenistic borrowings of fixed Homeric usages. Nicander uses the suffix twice, but neither instance is directly borrowed from Homer: in 409 (ἀϊδρείηφι) and 931 (κρομμυόφι) we see how Nicander applies the suffix to create new and unexpected instrumental combinations.[271]

Secondly, on more than one occasion Nicander employs dual forms, which in the second century BCE appear to have been extinct even in common literary Greek. What is left in the Hellenistic era consists of imitations of predecessors by means of borrowings.[272] The introduction of newly formed duals is, however, all but absent. Here too we find Nicander to be deliberately epic in his use of new and unique forms, with κυνόδοντε (231) for the fangs of a snake. In addition we find δράκοντε (609) for a pair of snakes (not in Homer, but found in Hesiod), and the traditional Homeric ὄσσε (431, 758). The form ἀμφοῖιν (647), apparently an epic dual, is in fact a *hapax legomenon*, which despite its strongly epic ring, is an imitation of pseudo-epic style, rather than of Homer.[273]

Thirdly, the *Theriaca* features a number of indicative aorists that lack an augment. Thus we find τύψε (202, 313), ἔκφυγον (281), ἀθρήσατο (313), and θρήνησεν (903), where the poet perpetrates a poetic licence that is primarily expected in the early epic diction of Homer and Hesiod. Although this peculiarity is certainly not restricted to Nicander, it does show his allegiance to the epic-Homeric tradition.[274]

Other poetical elements, found more widely in other Hellenistic poets, are the use of the personal pronoun ἑ (33), the very frequent use of the genitive ending -οιο, interestingly applied to both Homer (for the first time) and Nican-

271 By comparison, Apollonius' ἰκριόφιν (1.566, 4.80, 1663) is a direct borrowing from Homer (*Od.* 3.353 et al.), not a *new* application of an old suffix. The same goes for ἶφι (Call. *Aet.* fr. 64.5 Harder, Arat. 588), βίηφι (Call. *Dian.* 77), αὐτόφι (Arat. 980); ζεύγληφι (Call. *Dian.* 162) is not found previously, but ὑπὸ ζεύγληφι seems to be an adaptation of ὑπὸ ζυγόφιν (*Il.* 24.576).

272 Cf. Redondo (2000, 134), who shows that Apollonius' use of the dual is closer to tragic language than to early epic, but at any rate not original.

273 For the distinction between the use of the dual with or without the numeral, or the combination of dual and plural see Redondo 2000, 134.

274 By comparison, such violations do not occur in Aratus (Kidd 1997, 321), but they are not uncommon in Apollonius (e.g. 2.20) and Callimachus (e.g. *Jov.* 9, *Hec.* 11 H.). For the latter's selective adherence to Homer see e.g. McLennan 1975, 37, 75 et al.

der (both in 957), and the use of the Ionic -ου- instead of the Attic -ο-, e.g. πουλυόδους (53), even if the adjective itself does not occur in epic before Nicander.[275] An interesting case is the use of the uncontracted ὄθμα, for the common ὄμμα, which seems to be another pseudo-archaism (not found in extant archaic poetry, but used by Callimachus, e.g. fr. 186.29 Harder), although we may be dealing with an Aeolic form here.

In order to fit the metre we also find instances of common words that undergo lengthening. Thus we find εἰρύσιμον, 'hedge-mustard' instead of ἐρύσιμον. Although the adaptation is probably *metri causa*, such alterations do contribute to the overall sense of epic register found in the *Theriaca*.

### 6.4 *Learned Diction:* Hapax Legomena

If there is one striking feature of Alexandrian poetry that is always mentioned in relation to both its contents and its diction it is its learned nature. Perhaps one should replace 'learned' here with 'studied', as much of such poetry seems to have come about through scrutiny of archaic and classical poetry, perhaps in one of the new institutions of learning in Alexandria and, somewhat later, in Pergamon.

As to the 'learned' diction of Nicander, his scrutinous activities of reading Homer were succintly summed up in 1917 by Wilhelm Kroll in the *Real-Encyclopedie*, who calls him a "Glossenjäger".[276] Kroll's qualification captures Nicander's habit of collecting Homeric *hapax legomena*, reading Homer in search of any kind of useful rarity. This results in a diction littered with rare words, likely to be known only to the most learned reader. But in addition to borrowings from Homer we find many imitations of contemporary poets, as well as innovations apparently coined for the occasion.

Among the rarities of Homeric diction imitated by the Alexandrian poets, the *hapax legomenon* stands out in particular. Its appeal to poets lies both in the art of spotting them (in an age lacking proper research facilities in comparison with modern standards), and in the subsequent application of such a verb, noun or adjective in its new context. To make the game more interesting, this new context often stretches the original meaning of the Homeric *hapax legomenon*, so that the imitation is turned into a clever variation.

The assessment of each individual instance as a valid *hapax legomenon* is not unproblematic. Whereas some words in Greek literature are evidently coined for the occasion, and for that occasion only, a phenomenon particularly

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275 Cf. κεινώσεις (56), which has the epic lengthening of -ε- to -ει-, but is not found in Homer.

276 See Kroll 1936, 259.

frequent in comedy, other words may be unique in a less specific manner. Many words (such as technical terms) occur only once in Greek literature, not because of their unique literary or aesthetic merit, but simply because comparative material has not been transmitted.

For the assessment of Nicander's literary language two categories are relevant in terms of morphology:[277] (i) Homeric *hapax legomena*, imitated by one or more Alexandrian poets, who either perused the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* themselves, or were inspired to use the Homeric *hapax legomenon* through their reading of contemporary fellow poets.[278] In this category the *Theriaca* contains *inter alia* the following imitations:[279] λαΐ (18), βλήτρου (39), ἀμορβοί (49), χηραμά (55), χλωρηΐδα (89), μελδόμεναι (108), φοινά (146), λιθακάς (150), ἄσιν (176), τιθαιβώσσουσιν (199), ἐπίδρομοι (242), ἀσφάραγον (245), ἁματροχιῇσι (263), ἐπιόσσεται (276), χανδόν (341), βούβρωστις (409), ἀγρώσσων (416), κώληπι (424), νεμέθων (430), τρίστοιχοι (442), ἔκπαγλα (445), πτυχί (458), ξερόν (704), ἔσκληκεν (718), ἀνουτήτῳ (719), ὀλετῆρος (735), πτόρθους (861), μειλίγματα (896), ἀτραπιτοῖσι (917).

(ii) Coinages, formed for the occasion of the context of the poem, and standing out as striking examples of the poet's style: κυδίστατε (3), ἀμμίγδην (41), πουλυόδουσι (53), ὑληώρεας (56), πολυρραγέος (59), λιπάσειας (90), λίπαζε (112), ἀβοσκής (124), νεβροτόκοι (142), ἀλλόφατόν (148), ἐπιφρικτήν (157), μηλινόεσσα (173), ἐχιδνήεσσαν (209), ζαλόωσα (252), ὀρεσκεύει (413), ἀρπεδές (420), μηκάζουσι (432), βρύγματ' (483), ἀλθεστήρια (493), γυιαλθέα (529), περιβρυές (531, 841), σκίνακος (577, cf. *Al.* 67), θερειλεχέος (584), ἐλεοθρέπτου (597), πετάλειον (628, 638), φυξήλιος (660), πεδόεσσα (662), ὑπαργήεσσα (663), ἐπικνήθων (698), πεδήορον (729), ἀραχνήεντα (733, cf. *Al.* 492), δύσδηρι (738), χειροδρόποι (752), μεσοχλόου (753), ἀλιρραίστην (828), ὀρειγενέος (874), ὁμοκλήτοιο (882), θαμνίτιδος (883), ἀβληχρέος (885), ἀμυγδαλόεντα (891), βαρυώδεα (895), ἐνικνήθεο (911, cf. *Al.* 368), μαστάζειν (918), λοιγέϊ (921), τύψει (921, 933), νεωρυχέος (940), κατακνήθειν (944).

It needs to be stressed here that for both categories hard and fast criteria are difficult to apply, particularly as it is impossible to tell whether a certain peculiarity is an invention of the poet, or borrowed from a contemporary or earlier poet now lost to us. Yet the sheer bulk of words not found outside

277 For reasons of clarity I distinguish morphological characteristics here from the intertextual dimensions of Homerisms, which are discussed in chapter 7. Of course such a distinction is merely theoretical, as morphological characteristics cannot be separated from their ability to trigger intertextual pretexts.

278 A similar case can of course be made for Hesiodic *hapax legomena*.

279 Among imitations of Homeric *hapax legomena* I include declined and conjugated forms.

the poem make clear that from this perspective the *Theriaca* is unusual even compared to other Hellenistic poems.[280]

### 6.5 *Hellenistic Borrowings*

Nicander's diction is strongly coloured by the language of Homer, yet it has been observed that several (proto-)Hellenistic poets seem to have made their mark on Nicander too.[281] This observation shows that Nicander was not simply interested in recreating the poetry of Hesiod using Homer's language, but wanted to employ arcane poetic language from both archaic and contemporary poets. His literary ambitions thus not simply hark back to the distant past, but are connected through language to the poetic traditions of Nicander's Hellenistic fellow-poets. His concern with their language—which is of no relevance to those who would be curious to learn about snakebites—serves to establish his place within the literary traditions of both past and present, and once again betrays his concern for poetry rather than medicine.

The influence of other Hellenistic poets seems to apply to Callimachus, Lycophron, and Euphorion in particular; Antimachus, in his stylistic capacity as a proto-Hellenistic poet, is taken into account as well.[282] Others, like Theocritus, are less renowned for their focus on récherché words. Although Apollonius seems to be well-known to Nicander, and is indeed occasionally alluded to, the former does not seem to have been particularly influential when it comes to idiosyncratic idiom.[283] Apart from Aratus' thematical relevance to the *Theriaca*, his language, rich in coinages, may well have been a source of inspiration to Nicander, yet this language seems to have yielded few borrowings, and rarely comprises glosses in the vein of Antimachus or Euphorion.[284]

In this section the focus will thus be on the four poets most influential when it comes to the language itself. Although it is difficult, considering the scanty evidence, to assess the immediate influence of these authors, some of the presumed borrowings are presented to us by the scholia, which show that the scholiast (relying on his sources, which may well go back to Hellenistic

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280 See Jacques 2002, xcv–ci.

281 See Volkmann 1854, 55–62. For the relevance of Numenius as a proto-Hellenistic didactic source see Klauser 1898, 5–7.

282 The influence of Lycophron of course assumes priority of the *Alexandra* to the *Theriaca*, which is not altogether unproblematic. Lycophron's chronology has been the topic of heated discussion, varying from early third to the second century BCE; for a summary see Sens 2010, 303–305.

283 A brief inventory of relevant borrowings from Apollonius is made by Klauser 1898, 8 n. 6.

284 For an overview of the particulars of Aratus' language see Kidd 1997, 23–26.

commentaries) seems to have had more knowledge of these authors than we do.[285] As Antimachus and Euphorion were both notorious for their recondite diction, it should not surprise anyone that Nicander, who equally indulges in such arcane matters, would pay tribute to their efforts by showing that he read them.[286]

Although Antimachus' floruit was much earlier than any of the Alexandrian poets, he has often been considered proto-Hellenistic, due to his concern with learned poetry, of which difficult, arcane language was a key element.[287] This language was particularly based on unusual coinages. As Matthews points out, in his fondness for adjectives in -όεις Antimachus may have set a trend, considering the many similar coinages used by the Hellenistic poets, but in particular by Nicander.[288] Antimachus' use of Aeolic-Doric forms, such as τιθα[ι]βώσσοισα in fr. 108 Matthews (183 Wyss), may account for Nicander's occasional use of such forms, since we learn from the scholia that Nicander was an admirer of Antimachus.[289] As Matthews states (following Wyss and Willamowitz) Antimachus is thought to have introduced a lyric colour into his epic diction by means of such Doricisms.[290] For other instances of a possible Antimachean influence see the notes on 269, 295, 420, 472, 642, 662, 705, 913, and 957 in the commentary.

The influence of Euphorion on Nicander was first studied by Schultze, who collected the few corresponding passages.[291] Here we find that Nicander's use of the verb κυνηλατέω in 20 (for κυνηγετέω) in the story of Orion is probably inspired by Euphorion. The scholiast offers a little more: the rare adjective θιβρήν in 35 is only found elsewhere in Callimachus (fr. 60c Harder = 54 Pf. = *SH* 266) and Euphorion (*CA* 81, p. 44). More interesting is 180, where the

285 In this light it is interesting that for quite some of these early Hellenistic poets the extensive scholia on Nicander are our only source for quotations and testimonia.

286 Nicander's keenness on abstruse words seems to be reflected by the work Γλῶσσαι, attributed to him, ostensibly dealing with rare words found in early poetry.

287 Matthews (1996, 15) assumes Antimachus to have lived from 444 till somewhere between 380 and 365 BCE. As his floruit 404 BCE is suggested.

288 Matthews (1996, 52) lists ἠνεμόεις, οὐατόεις, ὀφιόεις, σκιόεις, ἀρπεδόεσσα. According to Matthews such words are frequent in Apollonius; for Callimachus (e.g. θυμόεις, πυρόεις) see Hollis 2009, 14. Nicander's coinages of adjectives in –οεις are listed in section 6.2. An interesting case are Nicander's πεδόεσσα (662) and ἀρπεδές (420), which seem to be derived from Antimachus' ἀρπεδόεσσα.

289 Σ *Ther*. 3, Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὁ Νίκανδρος ζηλωτὴς Ἀντιμάχου, διόπερ πολλαῖς αὐτοῦ λέξεσι κέχρηται, διὸ καὶ ἐν ἐνίοις δωρίζει.

290 See Matthews 1996, 364.

291 See Schultze 1888, 46–49.

cobra (ἡ ἀσπίς, mentioned at the opening of the section in 158) is said to be hissing (ποιφύσσοντος). Here Nicander's transgression, combining a feminine noun with a masculine participle, is said to be an instance of μεταπλασμός, viz. grammatical inconcinnity. If Nicander considered his metaplasm (which is not infrequent in the *Theriaca*) to be a stylistic device, then it is not implausible that he picked it up from Euphorion.[292] In 406 Nicander tells us the raven is a harbinger of rain, κόραξ τ' ὀμβρήρεα κρώζων. As the scholiast explains, this recalls Euphorion's ὑετόμαντις ὅτε κρώξειε κορώνη (*CA* 89, p. 46); yet the same wisdom is given by Aratus in lines 963–968 of the *Phaenomena*. All in all the evidence presented by Schultze, extracted from the scholia, is meagre. Cameron has even expressed doubts about the anteriority of Euphorion (second half of the third century BCE) and therefore about the possibility of influence. If our Nicander, as Cameron cleverly yet unconvincingly suggests, was active in the third century BCE, Euphorion may have been the imitator, not the imitated.[293] It is, however, still more likely that Nicander is the imitator here. For instances of a possible influence of Euphorion see the notes on 20, 131, 163, 216, 324, 406, 595, 609, 861, and 902 in the commentary.

About Callimachus' influence on Nicander's language we can be more certain.[294] These imitations do not just consist of single words, but occasionally we also find Nicander varying on a phrase or a combination of words known from Callimachus. As to single words, λάκτις (*Ther.* 109) only appears in *Hec.* fr. 110 H.; the adjective ἀνιγρός (*Ther.* 8, 701) is only found in Call. 75.14 Harder and possibly 85.12 Harder.; κινώπετα (*Ther.* 27) is taken from *Jov.* 25; πυρικμήτοιο in *Ther.* 241 recalls Call. *Del.* 145; βούβρωστις (*Ther.* 409) was surely inspired by Callimachus' revival of the Homeric hapax in *Cer.* 102. For the rare περιβόσκεται in *Ther.* 612 we can look to Call. *Ap.* 84; the adjective λαιδρός in *Ther.* 689 recalls Call. fr. 75.4 Harder from the *Aetia*; cf. λεγνωταί (*Ther.* 726) with Call. *Dian.* 12; πολυστίοιο (*Ther.* 792, 950) is picked up from *Jov.* 26. See also the notes on 3, 5, 241, 244, 611, 703, 706, 742, 765, and 907 in the commentary. Larger phrases or combinations that may go back to Callimachus are: καὶ λοξὸν ὑποδρὰξ ὄμμασι λεύσσων (*Ther.* 457), cf. καὶ ὄμμασι λοξὸν ὑποδρὰξ | ὀσσομένη (*Hec.* fr. 72.2 H. =

292 For *inconcinnitas* in the *Theriaca* see section 6.9.

293 See Cameron 1995, 204 and 213; Magnelli 2002, 105 n. 11. Cameron, who gives much credit to the biographical tradition, seems certain about Nicander's early date. Magnelli, however, taking into account the literary evidence (e.g. the Callimachean metrical principles as adhered to by Nicander), believes in Euphorion's priority to Nicander, illustrated by *Al.* 433, which seems to be an imitation of Euphorion *CA* 108, p. 49 = 59 Lightfoot.

294 As Hollis (1990, 30) optimistically states, "the *Hecale* seems to have been Nicander's favourite reading, to judge from the number of his imitations".

374.2 Pf.) and ὑποδράξ ... | ... ἔβλεψε (*Iamb.* fr. 194 Pf.). Callimachus' enigmatic line on the stork, σὺν δ' ἡμῖν ὁ πελαργὸς ἀμορβεύεσκεν ἀλοίτης (*Hec.* fr. 76 H. = 271 Pf.) is cleverly reworked in *Ther.* 349, ἀμορβεύοντο λεπάργῳ. The occurrence of ποηφάγος and γαιοφάγοι close together (*Ther.* 783–784) seems to combine two fragments of Callimachus, viz. γηφάγοι (*Hec.* fr. 55 H. = 290 Pf.) and ποιηφάγον (*Hec.* fr. 56 H. = 356 Pf.); the rare κινωπησταῖς (*Ther.* 141) and ἰλυούς (143) are taken from *Jov.* 25, ἰλυοὺς ἐβάλοντο κινώπετα. The line-end λύματα δαιτός in *Ther.* 919 recalls *Cer.* 115.

Although Lycophron's presence in the *Theriaca* is felt less strongly than Callimachus', he seems to be responsible for the use of a number of words in Nicander's language too. Known for his extortionate rate of *hapax legomena*, in the *Alexandra* alone Lycophron appears to have introduced dozens of coinages.[295] Among those that seem to have been picked up by Nicander we find the verb βλύω (*Ther.* 497) from Lyc. 301, σπληδός (*Ther.* 763), elsewhere only in Lyc. 483, μνία (*Ther.* 787) from Lyc. 398, the heteroclite feminine adjective θουράς (*Ther.* 131) from Lyc. 612, δομή (*Ther.* 153), found in Lyc. 334, 597, and 783, and ῥόχθος (*Ther.* 822) found in Lyc. 402, 696, 742.

### 6.6 *Punning and Etymology*

Despite Nicander's reputation as a serious poet, as opposed to for instance the playful Callimachus, an interesting element of Nicander's language is his interest in etymology, and the presence of occasional puns.[296] They can be categorised as follows.

A first group is indentified by the use of etymological figures. The *figura etymologica*, when applied strictly, is only used for the collocation of a verb and a grammatically related noun, both built from the same root. Although this is seldom the case in Nicander, for whom the term *figura etymologica* should perhaps not be used, we do find many instances where the poet inconspicuously uses cognate words within the same line, or otherwise nearby. Thus we find the pairs μητρός ~ ἀμήτορες (133–134), γηραλέον ~ γῆρας (355–356), ἀστόργοιο ~ στέργει (552–553), στήσας ~ ἄστατον (602), μάντιν ~ μαντοσύνας (613–614), σκύλακας ~ ἀποσκύλαιο (689–690), Χειροδρόποι ~ δρεπάνοιο ~ χέδροπά (752–753), πρασιῆς ~ πράσον (879), σπέρμ' ~ σπείρεα (880–882), πολύθρηνου ~ θρήνησεν (902–903).

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295 Hopkinson (1988, 230) refers to calculations revealing that 518 out of the *Alexandra*'s 3000 different words are not found elsewhere. In addition, 117 words are not attested before Lycophron, and are likely to be coinages.

296 For Callimachus' use of etymological play see e.g. *Ap.* 97. For etymology in the Alexandrian tradition in general (including examples in Nicander) see O'Hara 1996.

A second group consists of what we could call etymological periphrasis. Despite the fact that many—though not all—names of plants or animals seem to be perfectly evident and do not need any clarification, Nicander is keen on stating the obvious, and pointing out the relation between a particular name and its intrinsical value. Thus we learn that the snake known as διψάς (334) gets its name from the thirst (δίψη) its bite causes (339). The fact that the snake called χερσύδρος (359) also operates on land is underlined by means of ἐν χέρσῳ (369). The designation of the animal described as the ἑρπηστῶν βασιλῆα (397) seems to refer to the 'king of snakes' (by analogy of the lion?), but is actually an etymological periphrasis of a snake-like reptile known elsewhere as βασιλίσκος or 'basilisk'.

As its name suggests, the snake called δρυΐνας (411) primarily lives in oaks, ὁ δ' ἐν δρυσὶν οἰκία τεύξας (412), ἔνθα κατὰ πρέμνον κοίλης ὑπεδύσατο φηγοῦ (418).[297] It does not come as a surprise that the herb called πανάκειον (508) is so called because it is of service to all sorts of wounds, παντὶ γὰρ ἄρκιός ἐστι. According to Nicander the root known as ἔχιον/ἐχίειον (65, 637), 'bugloss', gets its name from its curative qualities in countering bites of the viper (ἔχις, 545), and is hence callied ἔχις too (541).[298] The relation between the plant known as μελίφυλλον, 'honey-leaf' (554) or μελίκταινα (555) and μέλισσαι, 'bees' (555) is pointed out in 555–556. In 628 the plant ὀνῖτις (mentioned in *Al.* 56) is circumscribed as ὄνου πετάλειον, apparently because Nicander does not want us to miss the relation between the plant and the ass. And for those who are ignorant of the characteristic behaviour of the heliotrope, Nicander points out that the plant gets its name from its following of the turnings of the sun (678). See also the notes on 320–333, 687–688, 747, 752, 764, 802, 846, 882, 886–887 and 925 in the commentary. Although this sort of etymological play appears to be more frequent in Nicander than in other didactic poets, the phenomenon can already be observed in Hesiod, for instance in *Th.* 200, where Aphrodite's epithet φιλομμειδής is explained by her birth from μήδεα, or in the etymological connection between the goddess' name and ἀφρός, 'foam' in *Th.* 191 and 196.[299]

Apart from etymologies of various kinds, occasionally we find instances of the poet indulging in word-play or punning. This seems to be the case in 62, where the collocation ἕρσεται ἀγλαύροισιν virtually contains the names

297 The latter by extension of the all but synonymous nouns δρῦς and φηγός.

298 Apparently this plant was considered to be the same as one of the roots discovered by Alcibius (*Ther.* 541, 666), hence its alternative name in Dsc. 4.27; see LSJ s.v. ἀλκιβιάδειον.

299 See West 1966, 88.

Herse and Aglaure, the daughters of the snake-like Cecrops. In 349 Nicander has imitated a phrase of Callimachus, but has turned the latter's πελαργός into λέπαργος, thus turning a stork into an ass by reversing just two letters, substituting one fable for another.[300] In 310 a pejorative of Helen is coined, viz. Αἰνελένη, playing on similar puns in earlier poetry.[301] Closer to home is the play on the double meaning of ἰός, ('arrow'/'poison') in ἰόδοκος, elsewhere used for a quiver, but applied in 184 to a snake's fangs. In 215 the mountain Aselenus is qualified as πολιός, 'grey' or 'bright'; the latter interpretation turns πολιόν τ' Ἀσέλημον in the paradoxical 'bright Mount moonless'. See also the notes on 3, 50, 201, 605, 728, 824 in the commentary.

### 6.7 *Kennings*

A marked feature of Hesiod's *Works and Days* is its use of the so-called *kenning*, a kind of cryptical periphrasis in which a person, animal or object is circumscribed by means of one (or more) of his or its main characteristics.[302] As a literary term *kenning* stems from Old Norse and later Icelandic verse, but following the study of Ingrid Waern, the term has been adopted to describe the same phenomenon in classical poetry.[303] Although different definitions and types of kenning exist, the kenning as found in Greek poetry is described by Waern as "a descriptive periphrase which agrees with reality".[304] As such it does not properly contain a metaphor, as the latter does not rely on reality but on similarity.[305] The type of kenning Waern describes usually consists of

300 See Hopkinson 1988, 145

301 See 310 n. in the commentary.

302 According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* "an implied simile in circumlocution for a noun not named. [...] It ranges in kind from stereotyped descriptive compound epithets varying the plain name of a thing [...] to complex metaphorical periphrases [...] and thence beyond legitimate poetic functions, through more and more turgid conceits, into affectation and enigma."

303 See Waern 1951; cf. Bornmann 1952 and 1970. Hordern (2002, 40–41) is right in pointing out that the analogy with kennings in Old-Germanic literature (including Norse, Icelandic and Old-English) only applies superficially in terms of formation, as Ancient Greek does not use such periphrasis systematically as part of its poetic language. I will not follow his suggestion, however, that the use of the term kenning should be restricted to the Germanic phenomenon, as it found widespread use in classical studies and is now commonly accepted. In Greek didactic literature the term has been adopted by West (following Waern) in his commentary on the *Works and Days*, and by Kidd in his commentary on Aratus.

304 For a more general approach to descriptive animal names in Greek see Cook 1894.

305 Waern 1951, 7–8.

the combination of an adjective and a noun, with the adjective close to (or virtually identical with) the epic epithet, in which case the noun is often omitted.[306]

The well-known kennings used by Hesiod in the *Works and Days* consist of ἀνόστεος (*Op*. 524), 'the boneless one', for the octopus, residing in its 'fireless house' (ἀπύρῳ οἴκῳ, *Op*. 525).[307] The kenning φερέοικος (*Op*. 571) is used for a snail; the ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνήρ, 'day-sleeping man' (*Op*. 605) turns out to be a burglar, only active during the veiled night; πέντοζος (*Op*. 742), 'the five-branched one' is used for a hand; ἴδρις (*Op*. 778) is used substantivally for an ant, since he is 'the provident one'. Other instances mentioned by Waern, though not by others, are Ἀθηναίης δμῶος, 'servant of Athena' (*Op*. 430) for a carpenter, and νηὸς πτερὰ ποντοπόροιο, 'wings of a seafaring ship' (*Op*. 628) for sails.[308]

Despite Waern's survey of the use of kennings throughout Greek poetry, the range of the term is not very precise. Indeed, some of the kennings signalled by Waern in the *Works and Days* are not discussed as such by West, either because they are too obvious, or because they are not considered to be proper kennings. This is probably due to the ill-defined nature of the kenning, and its overlap with metaphor, metonymy, the epithet, and figures like the *pars pro toto*. Subsequently, as a technical term 'kenning' seems to be used mainly for a particular type of denomination: a substantivally used adjective of popular

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306 E.g. σκηπτοῦχοι ('holders of sceptres') in *Od*. 8.47, for σκηπτοῦχοι βασιλεῖς. For the distinction between literary substantival adjectives and popular, folkloric substantival adjectives (c.q. kennings) see also Bühler (1960, 181). One could argue that there is no need to introduce the term kenning for Homer's poetry, like Waern (1951, 79 ff.) does, considering the fact that the term *epitheton ornans* is both apt and widespread. It is, however, particularly in relation to the *Works and Days* that the term has been adopted, where 'epithet' does not always seem to convey what Hesiod is doing. There are two reasons for this: first, the kennings in the *Works and Days* appear to have a different origin than Homer's epithets, originating from popular language as alternatives to ill-omened names prohibited by taboo; see Sinclair 1931, 56–57; Hollis 1979, 83. Secondly: unlike Homer's epithets, Hesiod's kennings seem to be deliberately cryptical, although this second reason may be connected to the first. Sinclair (1932, 64) suggests that the cryptical nature of e.g. the ἡμερόκοιτος ἀνήρ in *Op*. 605 (a burglar) originally served to avoid being overheard, which is, however, not very likely.

307 The cryptical nature of this kenning is shown by the interpretations that have been proposed in order to identify the animal, consisting not only of a cuttlefish and a snail, but also (somewhat facetiously) a dinnerless sheepdog; Sinclair 1931, 56; West 1978, 289.

308 West adds γλαυκήν (Hes. *Th*. 440), 'the gray' for 'the sea' as a kenning-type denomination; in the *Catalogue of Women* (fr. 204.91 MW = 11 Hirschberger) ἄτριχος, 'the hairless one', is used for a snake; Most 2007, 237 n. 62.

origin, often employed as an (animal) riddle. But whether the use of the term 'kenning' is apt or clear enough is less relevant than the phenomenon itself, particularly considering Hesiod's influence on later poets. With a substantial number of instances in the *Works and Days*, the kenning, as an apparent feature of the Hesiodic style, seems to have influenced Nicander.[309] Interestingly, the phenomenon (with the restriction of animal description) found its way into Latin poetry as well, presumably as it "suggests the style of archaic high-flown poetry".[310] Whether the kennings in Callimachus and Lycophron are inspired by Hesiod too is difficult to assess.[311]

Similar to Hesiod's animal kennings, in the *Theriaca* we find νεβροτόκοι (142), 'those who bring forth fawn' for deer; λεπάργῳ (349), 'white coat' and βρωμήτορος (357), 'brayer' for an ass;[312] ὁλκήρεα θῆρα | οὐλοόν (351–352), 'the deadly, trailing brute', and ἑρπετὰ ὁλκήρη (355–356), 'trailing creepers' for snakes. ἑρπηστῶν βασιλῆα (397) 'the king of snakes' seems to be a basilisk, and ἔντερα γῆς (388), 'innards of the earth', is used for worm casts, although the latter is not original in any way.[313] Perhaps μόλουρος (491) 'tail-goer' (?), for a particular kind of snake, and βέμβιξ (806), 'buzzer', for a kind of wasp, belong to the same category. γερύνων … τοκῆες (620), 'parents of tadpoles' for frogs, though Hesiodic in sound, is based on Aratus' πατέρες γυρίνων (*Phaen.* 947). Apart from these animal kennings we find kennings designating people, as in Hesiod, or gods: men are called αἰζηοῖσι (343), 'those who are vigorous', and ἠμερίοισι (346), 'the ephemerous ones'. Zeus is called Κρόνου πρεσβίστατον αἷμα (344), whereas Prometheus is given the apt title πυρὸς ληίστορ' (347).[314]

Although the use of kennings is not unknown in other poetry, or absent from other Hellenistic poets (e.g Aratus, Callimachus), it is striking that the kenning

309 One can of course not deny the presence of kennings in other Hellenistic poetry, some of which does not seem to bear any particular relation to Hesiod. The folkloric origin of kennings explains for their presence in later Greek, as some kennings entered common speech without any special literary connotation. This is the case in Aratus' description of a worm cast as ἔντερα γαίης (959). Although clearly an animal kenning, Aratus is not trying to be original here, but simply follows his source, viz. Thphr. *Sign.* 42. The denomination is already found in Arist. *IA* 705a27, 709a28, *GA* 762b26 and *HA* 570a16; see Kidd 1997, 506.

310 See Hollis 1970, 82–83. As Hollis points out, in Ov. *Met.* 8.376 the Calydonian boar's designation as *saetiger*, 'the bristler', is a kenning. For other instances of kennings in Latin poetry (e.g. *sonipes* for horse) see Hollis.

311 E.g. Call. *Hec.* fr. 101 H., where Κλεωναίοιο χάρωνος, 'the Cleonaean bright-eyes', is used substantivally as a kenning of the Nemean lion; see Hollis 2209, 228.

312 Cf. *Al.* 409, βρωμήοντος.

313 See n. 305.

314 See also Van Dijk 1996, 134–137.

is relatively frequent in the *Theriaca*, which seems to point at a deliberate imitation of Hesiod's use in the *Works and Days*. Moreover, his kennings are generally marked by their originality. These new kennings, in addition to the imitation of Aratus, show Nicander's debt to Hesiod and the genre of didactic poetry in a traditional, yet innovative manner.

### 6.8 *Marked Word-Patterning*

Apart from idiom and metre, an important difference between the language of a prose treatise and a didactic poem is its attention to word order.[315] This is of course a characteristic of all poetry, shaped within the confines of lines or stanza's, but in didactic poetry, often dealing with markedly prosaic topics, the particular placement of words makes a distinct mark on a text that could otherwise look like a formal handbook. This is not to say that the balanced placement of words is neglected or irrelevant in prose (notably rhetoric), but when it comes to the *metaphrasis* of technical writings, its reshaping in hexameters becomes even more poignant.

As regards attention to noticeable word placement, the *Theriaca* does not fall short of such expectations. We find interesting instances of chiasmus, and plenty of hyperbaton.[316] As to the latter, framing an hexameter by a noun and an adjective in agreement is a stylistic device employed by many Hellenistic poets, ostensibly following Homer, as it was considered one of his refined details worth imitating.[317] A double hyperbaton (in two consecutive lines) of this type is found in 221–222. Also worth mentioning is the second section on Alcibius' root in 666, which is a close imitation of the first section on Alcibius in 541: both sections open with a hyperbaton, with 666 echoing 541.

A more advanced form of this type of hyperbaton (i.e. of nouns and adjectives encasing the hexameter) yields the so-called golden and silver lines. The former consists of two interlacing pairs of nouns (A, B) and corresponding adjectives (a, b), ideally separated by the verb (v).[318] The pattern of a standard

315 Of course word-patterning in general is based on syntax and pragmatics rather than poetical aesthetics; see Dik 1995 and 2007. In this section I will focus only on word-patterning that is characteristic of poetry, or that seems to be strained by the poet in order to create a language in which literary considerations prevail.

316 For chiasmus see 155, 316–317, 523, 693, 811–812, 828, 885, 936, 940; for hyperbaton see 15, 16, 144, 201, 221, 222, 252, 255, 349, 374, 442, 446, 470, 471, 516, 541, 621, 667, 692, 726, 750.

317 McLennan 1977, 97.

318 The terminology is not unproblematic, since the concept was not known as such in antiquity. Strictly defined patterns are therefore pointless. Yet the recognition of (variants of) the golden line as an aesthetic refinement of hyperbaton should still be acknowledged,

golden line, consisting of five words only, is thus ab-v-AB. Variants such as Ab-v-aB, or ba-v-AB are usually considered golden lines as well; more strictly, patterns such as Ab-v-Ba, AB-v-ba, and ab-v-BA are called silver lines, though the lack of a clear prescriptive system precludes strict distinctions. There are several lines in the *Theriaca* complying with this pattern of interlacing nouns and adjectives, although the place of the verb varies. *Ther.* 102 (abA-v-B), 201 (AB-v-ba), 339 (Ab-v-aB), 482 (abAB-v), 671 (Aba-v-b) and 746 (ab-v-AB) are all variants of the golden line. Such unusual patterns are not a feature of archaic poetry, but they are not infrequently found in Hellenistic poetry.[319]

Another feature generally limited to poetry is the postpositive use of prepositions. This occurs in *Ther.* 6, 72, 83, 137, 425, 519, 709, 731, 918, 919 and 927, following a practice that starts with Homer, but is commonly found in poetry.[320] Although postpositive use of prepositions is not a feature of aesthetically accomplished poetry or a literary achievement in itself, it is a feature of a more elevated style.[321] Moreover, it does underline that the *Theriaca* is first of all a poem in the epic tradition, replete with all of its characteristics, and not simply a treatise put to verse.

Although not strictly affecting word order, Nicander's use of *asyndeton* is worth mentioning too. It is occasionally applied between lines as a means of creating speed. This is particularly clear in the last part of the poem (e.g. 526, 837, 840–841, 855, 858, 874, 892, 901–902), which deals with herbs and recipes. Rather than pointing out each remedy step by step to obviate the addressee, the poet sometimes presents his data as a stream of elements. There we find a rapid repetition of different plants strewn out over successive lines, and

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particularly in Hellenistic and, later, neoteric poetry, considering their eye for such details. See McLennan 1977, 97; Hopkinson 1984, 87–88; Hopkinson 1988, 144; Bãnos Bãnos 1992; Cuypers 1997, 175; Reed 1997, 50–51.

319 The only instance Hopkinson (1984, 88) is able to spot in Homer is *Il.* 15.685, ὣς Αἴας ἐπὶ πολλὰ θοάων ἴκρια νηῶν, showing the pattern abAB. Among Hellenistic poets we find Call. *Del.* 14 and *Cer.* 9, Theoc. 1.31, 16.62, A.R. 1.521 and 917, 3.125, Euph. *CA* 86, p. 45, Bion 11.1–2. Variants occur in e.g. Call. *Dian.* 151, 209, 216, *Del.* 23, 66, 93, 102, 143; examples from McLennan (1977, 97), Hopkinson (1984, 88), and Reed (1997, 50–51). The phenomenon really becomes widespread among Latin poets, starting with the neoterics, although the Hellenistic influence is disputed; see Hopkinson (1984, 88, n. 1) for references.

320 Apart from περί, which is used postpositively in Attic prose, such use is limited to poetry; Smyth § 1665. In the case of bisyllabic prepositions the phenomenon is accompanied by anastrophe (except in the case of ἀντί, ἀμφί, διά).

321 The phenomenon found its way from epic into tragedy and satyrplay, but does not occur in the stylistically lower genre of comedy, apart from occasional lyrical or paratragic instances; Slenders 2007, 140.

rather than starting over, or making clear divisions, the poet prefers to move on without properly separating his instructions by means of conjunctions or disjunctive particles. The poet's use of *asyndeton* thus becomes a means to hold the addressee's attention through the manipulation of his formal presentation.

Not affecting word order either, but added to the category of word-patterning for convenience is Nicander's preference for the *versus tetracoli*.[322] In the *Theriaca* we find forty instances of this bombastic verse-type, which is about 4,18% of the poem. This is significantly higher than archaic poetry (Homer ca. 1,54%, Hesiod ca. 2,27%, and the *Homeric Hymns* ca. 2,38%). Among the Alexandrian poets we find a very low number in Theocritus (less than 1%; less than 0,5% in the mimes) and Callimachus (ca. 1,58%), but Apollonius (ca. 3,45%) and Aratus (ca. 3,7%), who are stylistically closer to Nicander, show a higher rate of four-word lines.[323] In his use of *versus tetracoli* Nicander is thus closest to Aratus, whose work may have induced him to create this type of line. Nicander's high rate is not surprising in comparison with his high rate of *hapax legomena*, coinages etc. throughout. Their impressive appearance is not seldom underlined by effects, such as alliteration (221, 312, 431, 496, 891, 908), assonance (464, 470), internal rhyme (50), hyperbaton (442), combination (434–435)[324] or correspondence (7 ~ 20).[325] Although not all of the *versus tetracoli* show the same metrical pattern, they typically have a trochaic caesura.[326] Moreover, they often form sense-units with the end of the previous line, typically starting after the bucolic diaeresis, which yields coherent 'octameters'.[327]

Another element within the category of marked word-patterning is Nicander's use of climax within the line. A good instance of the poet's careful placement of elements with gradual increasement of suspense is *Ther.* 301, αἷμα διὲκ ῥινῶν τε καὶ αὐχένος ἠδὲ δι' ὤτων. Neatly divided by the trochaic caesura and

322 Dactylic hexameters consisting of only four words were first studied by Basset (1919); cf. Hopkinson 1984, 147 (with n. 1) and Magnelli 2002, 85–87.

Hexameters consisting of only three words (as in *Il.* 2.706, 11.427, 15.678, *Od.* 10.137) do not occur in the *Theriaca*; Basset 1919, 218.

323 Basset 1919, 230.

324 Although *Ther.* 435 is technically not a *versus tetracolos*, the combination of 434 and 435 is a rare succession of two *versus tetracoloi* separated by ἤ at the opening of 435; Spanoudakis 2005, 405.

325 For the correspondence between *Ther.* 7 and 20 see 20 n. in the commenatary.

326 The only exceptions, containing a male caesura, are *Ther.* 378 and 470.

327 See Basset 1919, 221. Such 'octameters' are not infrequent in the poem; *Ther.* 122–123, 272–273, 276–277, 377–378, 430–431, 441–442, 463–464, 476–477, 495–496, 760–761, 854–855, 883–884.

the bucolic diaeresis, we see three elements of horror, of which the first is still common, to be followed by discharges of blood of a more violent nature. Occasionally enjambment seems to be used for effect, e.g. in 14, 18, 302, 350, 904, on which see notes. Interesting too is the way in which the poet introduces new subjects after the bucolic diaeresis, anticipating, so to say, the subject of the next line. As a result an impression of speed is created as the teacher hurries towards the next item on his list, unwilling to wait until the next line starts after the hexameter has been completed, as is the case in 637, 721, 850, 864, 914, 939, 941, 943, 946.

### 6.9 Hypallage, Inconcinnitas

The *Theriaca*, as a product of the Greek poetic tradition with its less restricted diction, shows some typical instances of grammatical incongruity. We find an instance of *hypallage* used for poetic effect in *Ther*. 54: in καπνηλόν … ὀδμήν it is of course not the stench itself that produces smoke, as both stench and smoke are by-products of heating. In *Ther*. 171 ἐνοπὴν ('sound') stands for lions and bulls themselves, not just for the sound they make. The phrase ψυχρότερος νιφετοῖο βολῆς, 'colder than the falling of snow' in *Ther*. 255, can of course not be taken literally, as it is the snow, not its falling that causes the cold. In *Ther*. 649 (σπέραδος … Νεμεαῖον … σελίνου), 'The Nemean seed of the celery', celery itself is associated with Nemean victors, not its seed (σπέραδος).[328]

More unusual is Nicander's use of *inconcinnitas*, i.e. his wilful deviation from grammatical norms, resulting in incongruous connections. This is most obvious in the incongruity of adjectives and nouns: θοώτερος … αἶσα (120, 335), ψολόεντος ἐχίδνης (129), νέατον … οὐρήν (229), ἀδρανίῃ … μέρμερος (248), τρηχύν … θαλάμην (284), καταψηχθέντος ἀκάνθης (329), νιφόεντι … δειρῇ (502), ῥίζα … αἴθαλος (659), οὐλοὸς αἶα (759), σίδηρον | … θαλφθεῖσαν (923–924); see also the notes on 172 and 659.[329] In addition we find instances of incongruous connections, as in *Ther*. 341–342, where εἰσόκε governs both the optative ἐκρήξειε and the subjunctive χέῃ.[330] One could intuitively take such inconcinnities to be mere grammatical errors, due to poor manuscript transmission; as such the use of *inconcinnitas* as a stylistic feature is hard to prove. Yet, as White and Hopkinson observed, it is not difficult to see such utterances as belonging to Nicander's arcane and conceited style.

328 See also notes on 2, 68, 880.

329 For the observed *inconcinnitas* in the *Theriaca* see Volkmann 1854, 60–61; Klauser 1898, 90; White 1987, 36; Hopkinson 1988, 144.

330 As observed by White 1987, 24.

A similar grammatical oddity is Nicander's use of ἄλλοτε (37, 43–44, 82, 436, 534–535, 558, 653, 839, 872, 879 et al.), δήποτε (683, 866), τότε (236, 433, 624, 654, 912) and ὅτε (838). Throughout the *Theriaca* Nicander applies these adverbs often without any temporal connotation, but evidently as synonyms for ἤ, offering parallel alternatives, not alternatives separated in time. This odd use, not recognised in LSJ, was noticed already by Klauser, who assumed this use to be borrowed from Nicander's precursor Numenius.[331] Gow & Scholfield recognise this use in their translation without commenting on it.

### 6.10 Variatio

A general characteristic of the language used in the *Theriaca* is the poet's indulgence in variation, an element that is characteristic of Hellenistic poetry in general.[332] The poet affects *variatio* as a stylistic device, which is reflected by the extensive range of alternations in the *Theriaca*. These include the frequent use of synonyms, the virtual lack of repetition (particularly of larger units), the different forms of directive verbs, the penchant for coinages, the attention paid to word order to avoid repetitiveness, and the differentiation in particles. As Nicander's variety of form has been studied by others, the following overview is not exhaustive, but serves to illustrate the range of the poet's application of variation.[333]

The poet's use of synonyms for the purpose of variation is evident from the wide range of alternatives.[334] Herdsmen, for instance, are refererred to as βοτῆρες (554), βουκαῖος (5), βούτης (74), νομέες (48) and ἀμορβοί (49).[335] A snake's coil is referred to as a μήρυμα (265), σπεῖρα (156), ἀλκαίη (123, 225), ἅλως (166) and ὁλκός (266), without obvious differences in meaning. Another

331 Klauser 1898, 5.

332 E.g. Hunter 1993b, 142: "Avoidance of repetition is a familiar and fundamental principle of Apollonian style, just as repetition of various kinds is an inescapable fact of Homeric style."

333 See Klauser 1898, H. Schneider 1962, Jacques 2002, xciv–ciii.

334 It needs to be stated here that the presence of many variants and synonyms in epic poetry does not imply a penchant on behalf of the poet for *variatio* per se. One could compare e.g. Homer's use of variants, which has much to do with metrics and formulaic composition, but little with aesthetic *variatio*. Yet Nicander's artistic pursuit throughout the *Theriaca* seems to warrant such a stylistic approach.

335 Although these variants are often not metrically equivalent, and occasionally consitute metrical alternatives, Nicander's use of variants is evidently not merely based on economy, considering the poet's synonymous use of δάχμα (119 et al.), βρύγμα (483 et al.), νύχμα (271 et al.), and τύμμα (653 et al.), for poisonous bites.

interesting set of synonyms is formed by the adverbs μίξ (615), μίγδην (932), συμμίγδην (677), ἀμμίγδην (41, 93, 912) and ἄμμιγα (850, 857, 941, 943, 949, 954). The process of kneading or mixing is referred to by no less than ten different verbs, as is reflected by ὀργάζω (652), φύρω (507, 593, 693, 932), κεάζω (644), ψώχω (629)/σώχω (590, 696), ταράσσω (109, 665, 936, 956), ἐνθρύπτω (81, 655), τρίβω (87), ἐν(ι)τρίβω (527, 539, 597) and κατατρίβω (85). Equally characteristic is his use of cognate synonyms, e.g. ἑρπηστής (9, 206, 397) next to ἑρπετόν (21, 216, 355, 390, 702), σμερδαλέος (144, 161, 207, 293, 765) next to σμερδνός (815), or τύμμα (426, 737, 919, 930), next to τύψις (921, 933) and τυπή (129, 358, 673, 784).

The use of synonyms, or at least words similar in thought or meaning, is evident in the poet's choice of directive verbs as well. The range of verbs used to express 'pay attention', 'do not forget' comprises φράζεο (157, 438, 589, 656, 759), εἴρεο (359), τεκμαίρευ (796), πιφαύσκεο (411, 725), περιφράζεο (541), περιφράζοιο (715), πεύθεο (700), πεπύθοιο (935), next to periphrases such as εὖ δ' ἂν ἴδοις (209), εὖ ἂν μάθοις (258), εὖ ἂν γνοίης (320), μηδὲ σύ ἐπιλήθεο (574), μή σύ λιπεῖν. Instructions by the teacher in the first person range from ἐνίψω (282), λέξω (528), ἐρέω (636), αὐδήσω (770), διείσομαι (494, 837) to the more general οἶδα (805, 811). Instructions to 'act', rather than merely 'think of, consider', range from ἄγρει (534, 594, 630, 685, 879), ἄγρεο (666), ἀγρεύσεις (518), to ἑλέσθαι (604). The teacher's self-confidence is expressed in the second person future verbs δήεις (100, 384, 661, 714, 786) and ἐπιόψεαι (513).

As follows from this brief overview, the poet not only employs lexical variation to attain variegation, but he also employs different moods to convey his message. Here we find a range of options that essentially express the same idea. Apart from the frequent proper imperatives, such as ἕλευ (529), ἄγρει (534 594, 630, 879), πῖνε (603), we find optatives with mild imperative force, e.g. ἐνιφλέξαις (45), ὑποστορέσαιο (63), λιπάοις (80), ἐνθρύψαιο (606). The *infinitivus pro imperativo* constitutes a third variant, as in τέρσαι (96), ἐξαλέασθαι (121), δρέψασθαι (498), or λιπεῖν (625).[336] A fourth option lies in impersonal constructions, such as φράζεσθαι δ' ἐπέοικε (70), and μίσγοιτο (519).

The poet's penchant for *variatio* not only follows from the variants themselves, but particularly from their sophisticated dispersion in the poem. This can be illustrated, for instance, in 518–520, where we find a succession of an active second-person future indicative (ἀγρεύσεις), an 'impersonal' passive third-person optative (μίσγοιτο), and an active second-person present imperative (ὀπάζεο), for the sake of *variatio*. *Ther*. 600–606 show a similar alternation:

336 All instances are collected by Klauser 1898, 89.

the first instruction is shaped as a participle (προταμών, 599), followed by an optative (κέρσαιο, 601), a proper imperative (πῖνε, 603), and an *infinitivus pro imperativo* (ἑλέσθαι, 604).[337]

Another manifestation of Nicander's preference for *variatio* consists in variations of combinations, often without semantic differences. Thus we find περιτέτροφε χαίτῃ (542), avoiding the repetition—in the same *sedes*—of περιδέδρομε χαίτῃ (503). A similar pair is formed by ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγούς (636) and ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγήν (527), the latter being in turn varied upon as κνωψὶν ἀρωγήν (520).

This brief selection merely serves as an indication of Nicander's stylistic pursuit of *variatio*; other instances can be found throughout the commentary. But even without aiming at completeness, this overview should point out the strong lexical nature of Nicander's poetics, which is for a significant part based on originality and elegance of form. This dimension of Nicander's aesthetics, which has often been considered mere pedantry, deserves a proper place within Nicander's poetics, next to intertextual and, to a far lesser extent, metapoetical utterances.

### 6.11 *Metre*[338]

No comprehensive study has been made of Nicander's metrics yet, but over the last century various scholars have made valuable observations with regard to Nicander's verse-technique, and his position within the development of the post-Callimachean Hellenistic hexameter.[339] The 'Callimachean rules' have been a point of reference for just about every single scholar assessing the position of other Hellenistic poets.[340] Some poets (e.g. Aratus) are markedly more old-fashioned than others, such as Theocritus and Apollonius, who are much closer to the Callimachean model.[341] Within this diachronical model Callimachus is considered the most strict in terms of violation of bridges, restriction of word types, allowing of elision etcetera, to be superseded in late antiquity by Nonnus and his followers, whose standards became even

337 Cf. the variation in ἀπὸ χροός (421) and χρωτὸς ἄπο (425) as a means to avoid repetition after only a few lines.

338 For the data in this chapter I am heavily indebted to Maas 1962, West 1982, Magnelli 1995, Jacques 2002, and Magnelli 2006.

339 Magnelli (2006, 198 n. 52) expresses his expectation of a proper study on Nicandrean metre by De Stefani in the future.

340 E.g. Kidd 1997, Reed 1997, Hunter 1999, Magnelli 2006.

341 For the 'rules' of the Callimachean hexameter see Maas (1962, 59–65), West 1982 (152–157), Hopkinson (1984, 51–55), Mineur (1984, 34–45), Hollis (2009, 15–23).

stricter.[342] In this respect it is important to state that Nicander is one of the most Callimachean poets of the entire Hellenistic period. This again underlines that Nicander is concerned to a high degree with the technicalities of poetry, rather than the technical nature of his subject matter. What follows here is a brief outline of some of the features of Nicandrean metre, heavily indebted to the research of others.[343]

### Dactyls and Spondees

Of the 32 possible patterns of dactyls and spondees in the first five feet of the hexameter (the last foot, being catalectic, does not count) Nicander uses only nineteen in the *Theriaca*.[344] He has a strong preference for lines with a single spondee in the second foot (*dsddd*, 22.7%) and for holodactylic lines (*ddddd*, 21.4%), of which he sometimes creates large strings, e.g. five successive lines of this type in 505–509, four in 435–438; there are seven shorter strings of three successive holodactylic lines. Nicander's use of lines with a single spondee in the first foot (*sdddd*, 12.6%) is considerably less frequent. Other patterns found frequently enough are *dsdsd* (9%), *dddsd* (8.6%), and *ssddd* (8.5%). The six most common types of verse arrangement thus account for 82.7% of the entire poem. Although nineteen different patterns are used, some of them, especially those with three spondees, are very rare. There is only one instance each of the patterns *sssdd* (523), *sdssd* (387), *sdsds* (206), and two of *dsssd* (205, 667), and *ddssd* (37, 601). The only verse type featuring three spondees that is used a little more frequently is *ssdsd* (3%).[345] Most verses (439 in total) thus have one spondee (45.8%), followed by two spondees (278 instances; 29%). Only 35 lines (3.6%) feature three spondees. As in Callimachus, there are no lines with four or even five spondees, which creates a higher dactylicity than the poetry of Homer.[346] Moreover, in his distribution of dactyls and spondees over the first three feet of the hexameter, Nicander is very close to Callimachus.[347]

Many Hellenistic poets had a liking for the composition of lines with a spondaic fifth foot (σπονδειάζοντες), especially in two succeeding lines.[348] For

342 See Wifstrand (1933), West (1982, 177–180).

343 Most importantly Maas 1962, West 1982, 152–157; Jacques 2002, cxxiii–ix; Oikonomakos 2002, 135–152; Magnelli 2006, 198–201.

344 Eighteen in the *Alexipharmaca*; Oikonomakos 2002, 135.

345 Figures of patterns of dactyls and spondees are based on my own countings, which differ very slightly from the figures presented in Oikonomakos 2002.

346 See Mineur 1984, 35

347 Brioso Sánchez 1974, 18–22; Oikonomakos 2002, 135; Magnelli 2006, 199.

348 Cf. Hopkinson (1984, 55), Sicking (1993, 74), and Hunter (1999, 19). Van Raalte (1986, 37)

the *Theriaca* at least, Nicander was evidently not fond of this type of line, as the percentage of *spondeiazontes* is remarkably low (21 instances; 2.2%), compared to other Hellenistic poets: Callimachus (7%), Apollonius (8%); it is a prominent feature of Euphorion and Aratus (both 17%), and particularly of Eratosthenes (24%); among the proto-Hellenistic poets Antimachus (22%) stands out.[349] Moreover, Nicander is not keen on writing successive spondaic lines as a 'modern' stylistic device, which do not occur in the *Theriaca*.[350] The instances of a spondaic fifth foot are limited to cases where they cannot be avoided, as with fixed names (cf. 12, 957), or when Nic. is quoting a line-end from Aratus (which explains ἐστήρικται in *Ther.* 20). Other cases all comprise line-ends of words consisting of four syllables or more (51, 60, 150, 183, 206, 231, 384, 401, 433, 605, 720 (six syllables), 761, 796, 803, 827, 932), with the exception of 591, which ends in a three syllable word. Moreover, Nicander's *spondeiazontes*, just like Callimachus', never have a spondaic fourth foot.[351]

Although Nicander's use of *spondeiazontes* is markedly different than Callimachus', in his distribution of dactyls and spondees he is thus very close to Callimachus.[352]

### Caesura and Diaeresis

The late fifth and the fourth century (Archestratus, Matro) saw an increase of the masculine (or penthemimerical) caesura, which in Homer had always been lower, as feminine (or trochaic) caesuras dominate in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (57%).[353] In Aratus the frequency of the feminine caesura was down to 50%. The more dominant Alexandrian poets changed the tide, with much higher

rightly points out that, considering the great differences between different poets, one should be hesitant in considering *spondeiazontes* caracteristic of Hellenistic poetry in general.

349 The *Alexipharmaca* has an equally low rate (2.6%). On the contrary, the remaining fragments of his *Georgica* show the much more average percentage of 9%. The only author that comes close to Nic. in figures is Theocritus, but only in his mimic (3%) and bucolic (1.3%) group; figures from West 1982, 154; see Hollis 2009, 18 n. 19 and Magnelli 2006, 198–201.

350 See Magnelli 2002, 66–68 and 2006, 199; his rates are not based on the *Theriaca* only.

351 See West 1982, 154 with n. 47. Euphorion is equally strict, but Theocritus, Apollonius and Aratus show some exceptions.

352 As shown by Brioso Sánchez, who studied the distribution of dactyls and spondees in the first three feet of Nicander's hexameters. See Brioso Sánchez (1974, 18–22) and Magnelli (2006, 199).

353 West 1982, 153.

rates in Apollonius (67%), Theocritus (73% in the epic poems, though only 56% in the bucolic *Idylls*), Callimachus (74% in the hymns), and Euphorion (77.2% in the fragments). With 70% (278 masculine caesurae; 680 feminine caesurae), the occurrence rate of the feminine caesura in the *Theriaca* is comparable to his Alexandrian predecessors, although much higher than his 'old-fashioned' didactic precursor Aratus.[354] With an occurrence rate of 58% the bucolic diaeresis is somewhat less frequent than in Callimachus (63%), or Theocritus (74% in the bucolic poems), although close to Apollonius (57%) and again a little higher than Aratus (50%); by comparison, the *Alexipharmaca* only has a 44.6% rate, which shows that Nicander's predilections are not very strict, or rather that one cannot generalize about his metrical style based on the *Theriaca* alone. Not surprisingly, Bion has a much higher rate (80%). Moschus' *Europa*, a more epic poem than Bion's bucolics, is again closer to Apollonius and Nicander, with 60%. The postponement of the main caesura to the fourth foot, not infrequent in Homer ("about once in 100 lines"), and still regularly used by Archestratus (5.5%) in the fourth century all but disappears.[355] It is not found in Callimachus or Euphorion, and only twice in Apollonius (due to proper names). With eight instances Aratus is, again, a little more old-fashioned, compared to Nicander, who only once (894) substitutes a masculine or feminine caesura for a *hephthemimeres* in the *Theriaca*.

### Elision

In general, from early on elision at line-end had always been avoided, but was allowed at a caesura or diaeresis (especially in the case of δέ and τε). Judging from the paucity of the exceptions, for Callimachus this was not acceptable, and he does not allow for elision at Hermann's Bridge, Naeke's Bridge or Meyer's Bridge either.[356] Moreover, elision should not be applied to nouns or verbs. These rules are followed less strictly by Nicander, who often elides nouns (77, 134, 140, 314, 339, 347, 360, 407, 422, 483, 510, 654, 673, 880, 891, 894) and less frequently also verbs (71, 309, 425, 456, 822, 829). As expected, δέ is elided very often (184 instances), but only twice just before the caesura (351, 631), thus only slightly infringing on the Callimachean principle. On the other hand, τε is never elided at all.

354 West (1982, 153) gives 63% for Nicander, but that number is not based solely on the *Theriaca*.

355 Maas 1962, 60; West 1982, 153.

356 Maas 1962, 88. For the few exceptions see Hopkinson 1984, 53.

### Inner Metrics and Adherence to Other 'Callimachean Rules'

In his approach to the regulations of the dactylic hexameter, Nicander adheres very closely to the principles of Callimachus, which were considered the most refined of the Hellenistic era.[357] These rules, refinements of the more liberal hexameters of early epic, Nicander strictly followed, and infringements are very rare in the *Theriaca*.

(a) Naeke's Law, forbidding word-break after a spondaeic fourth foot, is violated only once (*Ther.* 457, σπειρηθεὶς καὶ λοξὸν ὑποδρὰξ ὄμμασι λεύσσων).[358] The infriction is perhaps due to Nicander's wanting to vary on both Homer and Callimachus; see 457 n.

(b) Violation of Hilberg's Law (no word-break after a spondaic second foot) is rare too (97, 491, 530, 618, 890, 892).

(c) There is no single violation of Hermann's Bridge, forbidding word-break after a trochee in the fourth foot.[359]

(d) Meyer's First Law (no words that start in the first foot should end in the second half of the second foot) is violated only twice (285, 758; 600 and 894 do not really count, see 894 n.).

(e) Meyer's Second Law (no iambic words before a masculine caesura), which is not even very strict in Callimachus, is followed quite closely by Nicander: three real violations (152, 600, 701); 206, 459 and 887 do not really count as they are preceded by prepositive ἠέ.

(f) There is no violation of Giseke's Law (words shaped × – ⏑⏑ must not end with the second foot), unless one includes all cases in which postpostives are considered part of the 'parola metrica' (97, 190, 191, 242, 343, 344, 388, 398, 420, 524, 529, 729, 734, 890, 936).[360]

(g) A masculine caesura must be followed by a second caesura, be it a *hephthemimeres* or a bucolic diaeresis (or both): exceptions are 318, 387 and 597.

(h) Monosyllabic nouns can only occur at line-end after a bucolic diaeresis.

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357 West 1982, 153. For an overview of Nicander's adherence to Callimachean rules in comparison to other Hellenistic poets see the figures and references in Magnelli 1995, 142–163 and 2006, 200.

358 Hollis 1990, 21.

359 Maas 1962, 62. As Maas points out (1962, 93), a sense of observation of Hermann's Bridge is already found in Homer, albeit not systematically. It is not until Leonidas, Callimachus, Nicander et al. that entire poems without infringements can be found.

360 For the 'parola metrica' (word-end comes after word groups including postpositives rather than single words) see Magnelli 1995.

In Homer and Hesiod monosyllabic nouns in this position are neither frequent, nor characteristic. According to Maas, Hellenistic poets, preceded by Antimachus, "affect particular monosyllabic words" at line-end, followed by some examples. It is not really clear which words can be qualified as 'particular', but according to Maas Nicander's σήψ (147) qualifies.[361] One can add ῥώξ (716), σφήξ (811), and φλόξ (820). In these and other, arguably less colourful, instances (νύξ in 57, σάρξ in 236, θρίξ in 328, θήρ in 357, χρώς in 721) monosyllabic line-end is indeed preceded by bucolic diaeresis, except for 719 (τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἐγχρίμψαντος ἀνουτήτῳ ἴκελος χρώς) and 716, where the sequence ὁ μὲν αἰθαλόεις does not allow for a caesura. The instances in 10 (περ), 162 (δέ), 404 (τε), 570 (περ), 608 (τε), 637 (που) of course do not count, being postpositive enclitics, although there too (except for 404) a bucolic diaeresis is found.[362]

### 6.12 *Conclusion*

One of the most striking elements of the *Theriaca* is its language, characterised by glosses, coinages and *hapax legomena*, yet evidently rooted in the tradition of epic verse. The poet retains archaic elements, or even introduces new ones reminiscent of the language of Homer and Hesiod. Yet the *Theriaca* is more than a collection of lexical antiquities imposed upon a technical treatise in verse. Throughout the poem the poet seeks to present his material in new and surprising ways, paying close attention to word placement, originality, and infinite variation. Every word is weighed in order to prevent repetition or a disturbance of balance. Coinages based on variation in suffixes draw the reader's attention without posing immediate difficulties of interpretation. Those who would claim that Nicander's lexical alterations of his prose source are merely superficial, need only to compare the prose paraphrase of the *Theriaca* by the late antique Eutecnius to realise how deeply Nicander's diction has made an impact on what was probably a straightforward treatise.[363]

In addition to this novel 'Nicandrean' diction, so abundantly found in the *Theriaca*, the use of borrowings from other poets, equally indulging in abstruse studied language, establishes Nicander's position in the tradition of Hellenistic poets *par excellence*. Moreover, by demanding a sharp awareness of the reader, Nicander shows in what tradition he pictures himself and in which he wants to be read: apart from the epic tradition of Homer and the didactic tradition

361 Maas 1962, 64.

362 Maas 1962, 84–85.

363 For Eutecnius' paraphrase see section 9.4.

of Hesiod, Nicander shows his congeniality to his Hellenistic compeers by partaking in their poetic practices. The result is a complex mix of different literary traditions, none of which have anything to do with a medical context, or betray Nicander's interest in the subject of snakebites itself. His first and foremost interests are poetry and the literary needs and expectations of his readers.

## 7 Intertextuality

### 7.1 *Preliminaries*

The intertextual nature of Hellenistic poetry has been one of its main points of interest since the allusiveness of particularly the early Alexandrian poets has become the subject of scrutiny in the last century.[364] Indeed, the development of early forms of close reading in the library of the Museum in Alexandria, by poets who were often equally engaged in textual scholarschip and the writing of poetry, has produced works of literature that portray new levels of sophistication, particularly when it comes to (varied) imitations of single words or phrases and their contexts, as studied meticulously by the likes of Callimachus and Apollonius. This phenomenon of alluding to other texts (either older or contemporaneous), the evocation of their contexts, and the way the imitation gains meaning through the context of such evocations, has come to be considered a game of kings among the learned Hellenistic poets and their Roman successors.

364 The origin of the study of intertextuality in Hellenistic poetry can partly be found in the Latin poetry of the *neoterics* (particularly in that of Catullus), Vergil, Horace, and the elegists. Study of the allusive nature of their poetry has pointed not only at a tradition among Latin poets themselves, but also at the imitation of Greek, and particularly Hellenistic poetry. Among the most obvious examples we find the evocations of Euripides and Apollonius in Catullus 64, the many allusions to Homer in the *Aeneid*, references to Theocritus' bucolic works in Vergil's *Eclogae* etc. Some key notions of the study of intertextuality in classical poetry can be found (with bibliographical references) in Ross 1975, Thomas 1986, Farrell 1991, Hinds 1998, and Van Tress 2004, 1–23. The study of intertextuality in Hellenistic poetry seems to have grown out of the scholarship on Homeric imitation in the Alexandrian poets, as studied by Perrotta and Herter, followed by Pasquali (1942, 185–187), who introduced the concept of 'arte allusiva'. Giangrande (1967, 85–97) emphasised the concepts of 'implied grammatical interpretation' and '*oppositio in imitando*' in Alexandrian allusions to Homer; cf. Giangrande 1970a, 46–77. For a brief but useful overview of the development of the study of allusion in Greek and Latin poetry see Van Tress 2004, 7–21.

### 7.2 *Boundaries*

When it comes to determining the requirements for proper assessment of intertextual relations and their poetical relevance, the concept of intertextuality is not easy to delimit, both in terms of contextual relevance and the discrepancy between accidental similarity and probable intentional allusion.[365] The study of intertextuality is hampered by many different interpretations of the concept, varying from a range of evident allusions within a closed literary environment of poet and reader who share the same background, to a modern author-independent web of texts that interlock in all possible ways conceivable without, however, paying attention to authorial intention. In addition we find a range of terms, with different levels of exactness, that serve to point at intertextual relations between texts. Thus we find allusions, references, imitations, echoes, evocations, reminiscences, poetic memory and the like, all aiming at connecting one text to an earlier one, by pointing out similarity of phrasing, contents, or context. Both the usefulness and exactness of such terms is difficult to assess, considering the different ways in which allusion works.[366]

Within the study of antique poetry we can discern two extreme interpretations of intertextual reference. In a strict sense intertextuality implies that a passage can only be understood properly through the knowledge of the context of the intertext evoked (often by slight variation of the *locus* imitated), or that through the intertextual evocation such a passage gains significantly in meaning. The intertext thus holds the key to interpretation, which would otherwise be impossible. At the other end of the spectrum we find words or phrases that evoke an intertext through similarity, yet without gaining a particular interpretation by this evocation. This is not to say that the provenance is irrelevant: the evocation may recall a general setting (for example an atmosphere of war when evoking the *Iliad*), or may point the reader to a certain tradition (for example the author recalls Hesiod in order to establish a connection with the epic-didactic tradition).[367] Between these two extremes we find a range of possibilities of intertextuality with varying degrees of connotation and evocation.

There are of course certain preliminaries to be met in order to assess an intertextual relation—for instance, both the author and the reader must without

365 For general notions with regard to the scope of intertextuality see e.g. Broich & Pfister 1985, 1–47.

366 The problem is addressed by Van Tress 2004, 21; for a possible distinction between references, parallels and the like see e.g. Thomas 1986, 174.

367 Cf. Thomas 1986, 175, who categorises such superficial allusions as 'casual references'.

reasonable doubt have had knowledge of and access to the text alluded to, the chronology of both texts needs to be established—but apart from probability, the credibility of an allusion, as pointed out by a commentator, is ultimately a matter of dispute. Yet there are several ways in which the probability of an allusion can be corroborated: are both texts operating within the same genre? Is their similarity in the metrical *sedes* occupied by the allusive word or words? Is there more than one reference to the same work or to the same author? Are we dealing with canonical authors, also known to the readers? Are we dealing with rarities, *hapax legomena*, or on the contrary with words so common that they are not noticeable in any way? Are we dealing with mirror images, or has the original word or phrase been adapted in any way? All these elements should be taken into account in assessing the potential validity of a presumed intertextual reference. Moreover, different texts pose different problems. In the case of references to Homer we can be sure that both the alluding author and his readers were familiar with both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—as was any one who had had some form of education—but there we often find potential allusions to nouns or phrases that occur multiple times. Can we expect such a presumably alluding poet to have a particular line in mind, even if this line is in no way unique?

Despite sets of 'rules' in identifying or determining the validity of allusions, there is ultimately no proof.[368] Probability, perceptivity, and the principal recognition of allusion as an intentional means of achieving poetic ideals are all necessary in order to find meaning in similarities that appear to be meaningless on the surface. However, by accumulating a bulk of similarities we can start to show to what degree one poet is indebted to another, and in what tradition his poem asks to be read.

### 7.3 *Intertextuality in the* Theriaca

Although the *Theriaca* has been the subject of scrutiny with regard to Homeric parallels and lexical imitations, a proper assessment of the different levels of intertextuality on which the poem operates has only started to grow recently.[369]

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368 For such a set of criteria see e.g. Thomas (1986, 174), who signals the issue of probability and validity in determining "when a reference is really a reference, and when it is merely an accidental confluence, inevitable between poets dealing with a shared or related language".

369 For parallels and imitations of Homer see Volkmann 1854, Ritter 1888, Touwaide 1991. Parallels of all kinds have been collected by Jacques 2002, *passim*. For a good approach to (contemporary) intertextuality in the *Theriaca* see Spatafora 2005 and Magnelli 2006.

Although the *Theriaca* seems to be concerned with language rather than intertextuality as its main focus, unlike Vergil's *Georgics*, which is lexically more convential yet more allusive in nature, the *Theriaca*'s literary value is greatly enhanced by awareness and knowledge of precursors alluded to.

In order to give an overview of the intertextual level of the *Theriaca*, the following categories can be discerned: (i) casual reference, (ii) single reference, (iii) combined reference, (iv) split reference, (v) opposition, (vi) self reference.[370]

### Casual Reference

Instances from the first category are by far the most frequent in the *Theriaca*. This category consist of instances where an earlier author is recalled, but where the particularities of the context evoked are only broadly relevant. Often we find instances where the use of a Homeric rarity (not necessarily a *hapax legomenon*) triggers a Homeric setting, but only in a general manner. This is particularly the case when the poet borrows a certain word or combination from the *Iliad*, thus evoking a world of battle. Consequently, the general context evoked is projected on the passage Nicander is describing in the *Theriaca*. As a result, many descriptions of snakes and other venomous creatures evoke—through allusions to Homeric language—a grim setting of war, in which snakes and the like act as opponents of man in battle. Thus the use of the verb ἐρωέω (117), αἴψα κεν … ἐρωήσειας, for escaping harm, calls to mind Homer, who uses the verb both for the flowing of blood and for driving back the enemy. The noun μόθος (119), used for a fight between two animals, has the Homeric undertone of 'battle din': in Nicander's world animals do not merely defend their territory, but go to war; cf. Nicander's similar use of the Homeric μῶλον (201). In 769 κέντρῳ κεκορυθμένον ('armed with a stinger', of a scorpion) is reminiscent of Iliadic scenes of armoured soldiers. The adjective πολυγλώχινα (36), of the tined antlers of a deer, recalls τανυγλώχις (of long-pointed arrows in *Il.* 8.297), χαλκογλώχινος (of bronze-barbed spears in *Il.* 22.225). Homer's οὐλαμὸν ἀνδρῶν ('throng of warriors'), occurring four times in the *Iliad*, is recalled by μελισσαῖος οὐλαμός (611), where bees, who are not very warlike, are depicted as an army, perhaps for comic effect, an image invoked by Vergil as well in the fourth book of the *Georgics*. The pun ἰοδόκοι (184), used not for a quiver, but for a snake's fangs (playing with the double meaning of ἰός) carries the same casual intertextual connotation; only the awareness of the Homeric use of the adjective—qualifying a quiver—makes such a pun worthwile.

370 I follow Thomas' categorisation, with minor adaptations; see Thomas 1986.

Within this category we also find instances of recontextualisation of particular turns of phrase in Homer. Thus the famous and typically Homeric combination ἕρκος ὀδόντων is borrowed and adapted by Nicander to a very different context.[371] Awareness of the Homeric use is necessary to understand that the combination means 'mouth' in Nicander, but the knowledge of the specific context in which the phrase occurs in the Homeric epics is not necessary, and is in fact different in each case. Yet to get the joke of the reapplication of a high-flown epic rarity to a new context one needs to know that in Homer the combination refers to speech (as opposed to 'chewing' in Nicander), and that in Homer the turn of phrase suits gods and heroes (as opposed to a herd in Nicander).

Single Reference

Here we find one-on-one relations between allusions and their intertexts. A single word or combination points at a single word or combination elsewhere, with contextual or thematic relevance. Particularly the latter, thematic, variant is more than once employed by Nicander, often to establish a connection with an earlier description of a snake. Although not all famous snakes from earlier Greek literature make an appearance, Nicander does seem to have browsed among some of the more obvious examples. Thus βαρὺν ἤρυγεν ἰόν in *Ther.* 314 is adapted from βαρὺν δ' ἐξέπτυον ἰόν in *Theoc.* 24.19 (both at line end), as a means of pointing at another description of a snake in a different, but thematically connected context. In this way Nicander displays his awareness of stories of snakes in literature, employing intertextuality as a game for the observant reader. A similar allusion to a snake elsewhere is found in 221, where ἀζαλέαις … φολίδεσσι recalls Apollonius' description of the snake guarding the Golden Fleece (A.R. 4.143–145) and thus its context of danger. The verb λιχμάζω in 229 is only found previously in ps.-Hesiod's *Shield of Heracles*—describing two grim snakes (*Sc.* 235); see also the notes on 126 and 305. Another monstrous creature, the sting-ray, is given mythical proportions in *Ther.* 835 through the collocation πυθόμεναι μινύθουσι, reminiscent of the Sirens, sitting next to piled up bodies of rotting men (*Od.* 12.45–46). When spiders are said to move ἐπασσυτέροις ποσίν ('moving with feet in succession') in *Ther.* 717, we are to think of the Greeks' moving phalanges in *Il.* 4.427, ἐπασσύτεραι Δαναῶν κίνυντο φάλαγγες, giving the spiders the impression of moving like an army.

371 *Il.* 4.350, 9.409, 14.8; *Od.* 1.64, 3.230, 5.22, 10.328, 19.492, 21.168, 23.70. Cf. *Ther.* 548.

### Combined Reference

Multiple intertexts appear to play a part within a single reference. In a context of horrendous snakes often reference is made to earlier 'intertextual' snakes, of which several characteristics are borrowed.[372] Elements in this category could arguably be considered topical, rather than intertextual, as it is difficult to tell whether Nicander had these particular *loci* in mind. What is relevant here at least, is Nicander's effort to give poetic depth to his descriptions, instead of summing up dry facts. In the use of the adjective σμερδαλέος, for instance, Nicander appears to be pointing at several earlier occurrences, all within contexts dealing with snakes. We get the impression Nicander has made an effort to collect relevant snake-passages in earlier literature, and wants the reader to notice. The use of the adjective for a snake thus seems to trigger multiple intertexts, viz. *Il.* 2.308–309, 22.95, *Od.* 12.91, A.R. 4.154, all bearing relevant contextual connotations. The image of a snake with a fierce, red eye (*Ther.* 178, 228) is not a mere natural observation (if indeed Nicander spent any time observing snakes), but a reference to earlier snakes with fiery, red eyes, viz. Hes. *Th.* 826–827 and Theoc. 24.18–19.[373] An extended combined reference is found in *Ther.* 9, ἄχθεα μυρία γαίης, where reference is made to both Homer's ἄχθος ἀρούρης, and to Empedocles' ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν.

### Split Reference

In this category Nicander has one original passage in mind, but splits the imitations and divides them over two different (and separated) passages.[374] Thus Callimachus' passage on reptiles, clefts, rivers and pebbles in the *Hymn to Zeus* (*Jov.* 22–27) is alluded to twice, once in reference to snakes and hollows (*Ther.* 141–143), and once in reference to rivers and pebbles (*Ther.* 950). The same procedure is found in *Ther.* 217–218 and 958, which are adapted split halves of line 40 of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, καὶ Κλάρος αἰγλήεσσα καὶ Αἰσαγέης ὄρος αἰπύ. The first half, on splendid Claros, is reworked in 958 (Κλάρου νιφόεσσα πολίχνη), whereas the reference to steep Aisagea (not found elswhere) returns, slightly adapted by means of synonyms, in 217–218 (καὶ ἐρυμνός | Αἰσαγέης πρηῶν).[375]

372 See Magnelli 2006, 190.

373 See Spatafora 2005, 247–248.

374 As observed by Magnelli, who speaks of 'multiple echoes'; Magnelli 2006, 187–191.

375 As observed by De Martino 1982, 45–50. For further details see notes on 218 and 958 in the commentary.

### Opposition

Occasionally, an allusion conveys a reversal of the context pictured in the intertext.[376] Such an opposition can be found in *Ther.* 341, where the rare adjective ὑπεραχθής is used for a victim dying of dropsy: the excessive (ὑπεραχθέα) amount of water taken in makes the navel literally burst—or so Nicander tells us. The adjective is apparently borrowed from Theoc. 11.37, where it is used of the bounty of the Cyclops' baskets, overburdened with cheese. Through allusion, a positive image underlines the negative aspect of the opposite. Another example: the locust (μάσταξ) in *Ther.* 802 is called σιτοφάγος, ostensibly a neutral term. Yet the attentive reader must notice that in Homer the adjective is used only for man, as the cultivation of grain is a sign of culture, distinguishing mankind from the ogrish cyclops, who is ἀνδροφάγος in Homer. Thus Nicander uses the adjective σιτοφάγος in opposition to Homer. The adjective ἀείδελος in 20 ('conspicuous') is based on an inversion of Hesiod's use of the adjective in fr. 67 MW (36 Hirschberger), where it means 'invisible'. The comparison between the centipede and an oared ship in *Ther.* 814 seems to be inspired by Lycophron, who has ἰουλόπεζοι θεῖνον εὐῶπες σπάθαις ('the shapely many-footed/oared [ships] struck with the blades of their oars') in line 23 of the *Alexandra*.[377] Whereas Lycophron compares ships to centipedes, Nicander uses the simile to compare centipedes to ships. In *Ther.* 276 the verb ἐπιόσσεται, used only once in Homer (*Il.* 17.381), in connection with death (θάνατον), is re-applied for looking at the sun, a symbol of life.[378]

### Self Reference

This category consist of allusions to other works by the same poet. Of course we are to think primarily of the *Alexipharmaca*, but references to other works (such as the *Heteroeumena*) need to be considered as well. Perseus' tree (Περσεῖος), used in *Ther.* 764 to indicate a tree that is actually called περσέα remains somewhat mysterious, unless the reader is aware of the poet's elaboration on the relation between Perseus and the persea-tree in *Al.* 99–105. The all too brief story of the metamorphosis of Ascalabus in *Ther.* 483–487 seems to point at Nicander's treatment of the story elsewhere, where additional details can be gathered. It is likely that Nicander is implicitly referring his readers to the treatment of the Ascalabus-story in the *Heteroeumena*.[379]

376 See also notes on 110 and 796.

377 See Touwaide 1991, 81.

378 See Spatafora 2005, 258, and *Ther.* 276 n.

379 Although we do not possess the actual text of the *Heteroeumena*, the outline of the story

### 7.4 *Conclusion*

The boundaries between intentional, meaningful allusions and verbal imitations or casual echoes that merely recall a certain style of vocabulary are difficult to draw. Although various benchmarks can aid in sifting the wheat from the chaff, which reference is considered intertextual and which is not is ultimately in the eye of the reader. But whether or not distinctions are made between different levels of allusiveness, one cannot deny Nicander's recurring involvement with both archaic and contemporary poetry. His allusions to passages dealing with snakes in other poetry, his assumption of the reader's knowledge of other works of Nicander, his variation on well-known Homeric expressions, or his reference to the catasterism of Orion in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, they all corroborate our view that Nicander is indulging in clever play with the literary traditions of epic, didactic, and Hellenistic poetry. Such references, rather than simply being indulgences for the poet's own pleasure, are aimed at an audience of learned readers, versed in these literary traditions.

## 8 Literary Motifs

So far we have seen several aspects of Nicander's poetry that convey a literary approach on the part of the poet to the composition of the *Theriaca*. In this chapter the focus is on different literary motifs that appear to be relevant to a proper appreciation of the poem, as they display Nicander's literary intentions. These literary motifs, unobtrusive though they may be, show that there is more to the poem than plain listings of snakes and plants. They betray the poet's artful eye for detail and gradually reveal Nicander's primary motives for composing the *Theriaca*.

### 8.1 *Personification*

The *Theriaca* purports to be a poem about man dealing with one of the most dread-inspiring inconveniences of nature. Yet in the *Theriaca* man is not the protagonist acting in the monomorphic world of nature. Although the poem is superficially concerned with preventing and curing poisonous infections, nature, as depicted by Nicander, forms the scene of a perennial struggle between man and beast. These beasts, be they snakes, scorpions, spiders, or other poisonous creatures, are not merely presented as animate props within the set-

can be followed through the summary of Antoninus Liberalis, who tells us that he took the story of Ascalabus from the fourth book of Nicander's *Heteroeumena*.

ting of nature, but as vile entities, acting out of malice or spite. Snakes and the like are not just burdensome side-effects of nature, but proper enemies with personal intentions, carrying out their wily plans, acting on their wicked nature. Thus we find many instances of Nicander dealing out personal traits to animals, and endowing them with human qualities they do not possess naturally. Although such personification is not evident in each descriptive line of every animal depicted, it is an important technique nonetheless, through which Nicander succeeds in painting a world of danger, in presenting his story more lively, and in fitting in with the epic tradition.[380]

The application of personified traits is typically achieved by means of adjectives, although the poet's use of a noun like ὁμεύνος, 'bed partner', for a snake (*Ther.* 131) shows that the technique is applicable to nouns as well.[381] Already in the proem φαλάγγια (spiders) are called κακοεργά, 'working evil deeds' (*Ther.* 8), a characterisation that reappears in 277. The snake known as the *cerastes* is not just noxious, but is called δολόεντα (*Ther.* 258), 'wily', 'cunning', epithets otherwise given to Calypso and Circe in the *Odyssey*. It does not attack on instinct—or so Nicander wants us to believe—but abides its time making evil plans for its adversaries. The personified depiction of snakes is even clearer in *Ther.* 313–315. There the helmsman Canobus accidentally steps on a snake. The snake does not react instinctively or immediately, but waits until the helmsman is sound asleep, before it takes its revenge. The scorpion in *Ther.* 18 lurks unseen under a rock (σκορπίος ἀπροϊδὴς ὀλίγῳ ὑπὸ λᾶι λοχήσας), waiting to attack unexpectedly. Even the millipede in *Ther.* 811 is said to contrive wicked plans (ἴουλος ἃ μήδεται).[382]

Even among other animals snakes bear malice, as follows from *Ther.* 367, where a certain snake is said to wreak truceless havoc on frogs (ἄσπειστον βατράχοισι φέρει κότον). Both the adjective ἄσπειστος ('implacable', literally 'not to be appeased by libations') and the noun κότος ('grudge', 'ill-will') are clearly projections of human emotions. The same projection is found in *Ther.* 140–141,

380 Nic.'s focus on the dangers of nature seems to be an enlargement of similar tendencies in Homer. In many of the Homeric similes nature is depicted similarly as a dangerous place. As Edwards (1991, 35) comments on the world of the Homeric simile: 'Here again the natural world is usually dangerous and destructive and must be confronted by humans, often without success' and '… mankind in a losing struggle with nature'. For Nicander's world as a dangerous world cf. Overduin 2014.

381 Cf. also *Ther.* 444, where the noun ἀνθερεών ('throat', 'zone under the chin'), otherwise only used for human beings, is used in the description of the appearance of a snake.

382 For anthropomorphism in the *Iliad*, where dangerous animals are similarly given traits of warriors, cf. Clarke 1995, 145–159.

where we learn that deer and roe in particular cherish anger towards snakes (ἔξοχα γὰρ δολιχοῖσι κινωπησταῖς κοτέουσι | νεβροτόκοι καὶ ζόρκες). One could consider such perpetual enmity to be a given in the system of nature, yet the poet chooses to use terms of human emotion. In *Ther.* 735 the personification of a certain spider becomes even stronger: ὀπιπεύει δὲ μελίσσας not only warns us this creature has vile intentions, but also points intertextually to Odysseus (*Od.* 19.67), who is accused of spying on women, ὀπιπεύσεις δὲ γυναῖκας. Though the verb itself may be neutral and the act harmless, it is presented imputatively nonetheless by the servant Melantho. Similarly the verb δοκεύων (*Ther.* 471), 'watch closely', said of the *cenchrines*-snake, eager to feast on gentle sheep, has an undertone of hostility; cf. the use of μαιμώσσων in 470.[383] New-born vipers eating through their mother's womb, thus causing her death, are said to do this to avenge their father, whose head is bitten off by his female mate immediately after it has inseminated her (*Ther.* 130–134). Natural as such phenomena may be, the presentation of the poet makes us think of it in terms of hostility/evil against gentleness/harmlessness, not as natural processes of balance in the food chain.[384] An interesting case of the reversal of personification of animals and plants occurs in *Ther.* 432, where victims of the bite of the *dryinas* start acting like animals, exemplified by the verb μηκάζουσι, which is elsewhere used of animals sounds, e.g. the bleating of sheep or the screaming of does or hares.

The poet's personified portrayal of natural phenomena is not limited to fauna. Occasionally Nicander depicts plants too as sharing in human emotions. In 60 the water-loving plant καλάμινθος ('mint') is depicted as 'delighting in gleaming rivers' (ἀγλαύροισιν ἀγαλλομένη ποταμοῖσιν, 62). The choice of verb, expressing pleasure, is typically a projection of human emotion. Similar emotions are found in 661, where a variant of the pine-thistle is said to be 'proud of its leaves' (πετάλοισιν ἀγαυρόν), and 537–538, where the plant known as helxine is said to 'delight in water' (ὕδασι τερπομένην). In 832 we find a tree that is 'flourishing in full pride' (δενδρείου ... πολλὸν ἀγαυρότατον θαλέθῃσι). A different sort of personification is found in 525, where the heavy scent exhaled by the plant known as treacle-clover is described by the verb ἀπερεύγεται, which literally means to vomit, as used technically in the Hippocratic corpus. The unpleasantness of the smell is thus underlined by the unpleasant sensation expressed

383 Cf. Overduin 2014.

384 Occasionally we are presented with other personified traits than solely evil intent. Cf. *Ther.* 138, where we learn that the viper, after having sloughed its old skin, is highly delighted with its new skin (νεαρῇ κεχαρημένος ἥβῃ).

by the verb, from a human perspective. Other instances are 532 where the plant savory is said to be χαμαιευνάδος, 'sleeping on the ground', an adjective elsewhere used for people or animals, *Ther.* 632, where the plant rhamnus is depicted as φιλέταιριν, 'enjoying (to keep) company', and 68, where the tufted thyme is depicted as φιλόζωος ('tenacious of life'), due to its ability to suck up water deep down in the soil by means of its long roots. In *Ther.* 862 the root of rhamnus is presented as a δρήστειρα, 'workwoman', because of its adequate services to a poisoned man.[385]

Nicander's anthropomorphising depiction of not just animals, but even plants, thus shows the curious perspective the poet has chosen within the *Theriaca*.[386] Rather than depicting the role of man within the system of nature, Nicander has chosen to make the natural world the focus of his descriptions. The result is a poem in which human beings appear as intruders rather than protagonists. Interestingly, this is a more or less gradual process, as the poem starts off from a human perspective, describing the measures one needs to take in order to prevent harm. As the poem develops, however, the focus shifts to the natural world, in which man can only play a limited role. Through personification the poet adds to the overall image that within the natural world, dominated by denizens whose personal perspectives the reader is informed about, man is the outsider, a vulnerable intruder who needs to resort to artificial means of protection.

### 8.2 Enargeia

As recent scholarship has shown, visually precise and vivid descriptions of details, whether fictitious or real, are a characteristic element of Alexandrian poetry.[387] Hellenistic poets, following the lead of Callimachus, paid special care to visual details, to an extent that shows a marked breach with earlier poetry.[388] Such visual details, as presented to the reader through pictorial description, can

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385 For an instance of the anthropomorphic portrayal of a plant see also 595 n.

386 See also 721 n. for an additional sort of personification.

387 Within the larger framework of realism in Alexandrian poetry, *enargeia* has been particularly studied by Zanker; see Zanker 1983, 1987, 1989, 1996, 1998 and 2004.

388 See Zanker 1983, 126; 1987, 40. The concept of *enargeia* itself, however, is applicable to literature before the Alexandrian age, as is shown by Dionysius' application of the term *enargeia* to characterise Lysias' style, i.e. presenting descriptions that are so compelling that the listener becomes an eye-witness; see Zanker 1987, 39. The frequent use of the term *enargeia* in the scholia on Homer also indicates that the concept is applicable to earlier poetry, or perhaps to poetry in general.

supplement the narrative context by telling their own story.[389] Moreover, they can add to a sense of credibility, particularly when the narrative itself is not very credible (for instance because it is mythological).[390] Aetiology, together with details based on contemporary scientific results, makes unlikely stories seem more probable, as they lessen the gap between the incredible and the credible. Thus we find ample descriptions of the reality of everyday life, of ordinary people in ordinary settings, and details that give the impression of credibility, or at least an air of probability.[391] As a literary device *enargeia* plays an important role in the *Theriaca* in different ways. We can distinguish between (i) pictorial realism, (ii) depiction of low and everyday life, and (iii) veracity of myths.[392]

### Pictorial Realism

In a poem that is ostensibly primarily concerned with *realia*, it is not surprising that a lot of attention is paid to visual details. This applies foremost to Nicander's vivid descriptions of animals and plants, sometimes triggered by verbs that explicitly ask us to look. Thus in *Ther*. 209 we find εὖ δ' ἂν ἐχιδνήεσσαν ἴδοις πολυδευκέα μορφήν, 'please look closely at the various forms of the viper', though there is of course nothing to see for either the internal or the external addressee.[393] Such verbs are not only used to create the illusion of a didactic setting in which the teacher is virtually pointing his finger at the snake itself, it also demands from the addressee to visualize the snake or plant in question mentally.[394] Animals are generally depicted in a truthful way, and even when we get the feeling Nicander never saw a particular type of snake him-

389 Zanker 1996.

390 E.g. Apollonius' depiction of the *Argo*: despite its fantastic nature (a ship that can talk) its depiction strikes us as very realistic nonetheless; Zanker 1983, 126–127.

391 See Zanker 1983, 126–128 for some examples. One can think of the realistic depictions of ordinary people in Theocritus' *Idylls* 2 and 15, the portrayal of Hecale by Callimachus, or of Molorcus in the *Aetia*, the characters in Herodas' *Mimiambs* etc.

392 For the distinction see e.g. Zanker 1983.

393 This technique is of course not new, as it is already found in Homer, who uses second person optatives with ἄν to draw the reader/listener to the scene to come and see for himself; cf. De Jong 1987, 54–60. Of course didactic poetry (in which second person addresses are the rule) is different from narrative epic (in which second person addresses are the exception), but the effect (demanding the addressee to make a mental picture) is not dissimilar; cf. De Jong etc. 2004.

394 Cf. Arat. 733 (οὐχ ὁρᾄς;), where a similar technique is used emphatically: in the *Phaenomena* looking (viz. at the sky) is at the core of the poem's subject, even though there is only words to read.

self, his descriptions hardly ever verge on the incredible. On the contrary, his descriptions appear to be so faithful that we hardly ever doubt that his knowledge comes from personal experience, not books. Attention is usually paid to size, build, colour, and particulars of animals or plants in such a way that we can almost draw a picture based on the data given.[395] Consequently, animals like the fictitious flying scorpion in *Ther.* 801–804 appear to be real, based on the details given by the poet.[396] The poet never resorts to plainly incredible exaggerations, but sticks to his apparently informed account. This is, however, deceptive, as many details are left out. The sections on cures in particular are fallacious: the huge amount of information presented gives us the impression that all we need to start preparing recipes is at hand. In truth many details are lacking, not least of all the proper dosage of the single ingredients: the poet wants to *sound* like a true expert, and it is his talent for *enargeia* that makes us believe we are given all the information needed.

This is not to say that all of Nicander's descriptions are littered with inaccuracies, nor that they are plainly—let alone intentionally—faulty. As most, if not all, of the information stems from prose sources, many observations are correct and correspond with accounts in other authors. Nicander's description of the effects of a viper-bite, for instance, are remarkably similar to Apollonius' description of the mishap of the Argonaut Mopsus, who is bitten by a snake in A.R. 4.1501.[397] Both Apollonius' and Nicander's descriptions seem to rely on contemporary scientific knowledge, particularly medicine. This aspect of *enargeia*, where science serves to corroborate veracious accounts, is a prominent feature of Apollonius' pictorialism, and the same feature is found in Callimachus and other Alexandrian poets.[398] In *Ther.* 673 a dog is bitten in the tear-gland of the corner of its eye. Although this is not a scientific observation in itself, the remarkable eye for detail displayed here, including a very exact but otherwise pointless detail, may be related to contemporary anatomical

395 Toohey (1996, 65) is correct in pointing out that Nicander's description of the *dipsas*-snake is far from detailed, but this description is not representative of other snakes, about which we often learn far more.

396 Flying scorpions do not exist. The poet may be thinking of scorpionflies or dragonflies here, which have some resemblance to scorpions, but are harmless as they do not have stings and are not poisionous.

397 The similarity is pointed out by Zanker 1987, 99–100. Green (1997, 348–349), however, is right in pointing at the subtle differences, and in his conclusion that Apollonius' viper is a literary compilation, given the ghastly features of several types of snakes.

398 See Zanker 1987, 124–127; Hughes Fowler 1989, 110–111; Zanker 2004, 159–160. Theocritus seems to be an exception here.

observations as well. As such, scientific descriptions, even if they are presented in an incomplete or inexact manner, provide the *Theriaca* with an air of credibility as a dependable and invaluable work.

An aspect of pictorialism that is particularly typical of the *Theriaca* is the poet's keenness on vivid descriptions of suffering. Although there is no lack of depiction of physical suffering in earlier poetry, Nicander stands out in his attention to detail, and his fascination for gory details. The element of suffering itself is overshadowed by the symptoms listed. The poet usually lets the details speak for themselves. Sympathy on account of the poet is not very prominent in Nicander's descriptions, and his general detachment gives us the impression he is more interested in sensational details than in emotion.[399] The description of the bite of the viper (*Ther.* 235–257) is characteristic: the symptoms listed comprise more than twenty lines, yet nowhere does the poet express that he feels sorry for the victim. Instead we are informed about an oily discharge from the wound, lumps of different colours on the skin, ulcers emitting blue poison, inflammation of the body, retchings, convulsions, sensory failure, darkness in the head, general weakness, sensations of thirst, coldsweat, or the vomiting of bile. The poet's final remark does not deal, as we would expect, with the sorry state of such a victim, but with the different colours of the skin, after which the poet moves on to a new topic.[400] As Toohey points out, sensationalism and Nicander's penchant for the macabre outweigh sympathy in the *Theriaca*, yet both are perceived as manifestations of the poet's *enargeia*.[401] Spatafora too rightly characterises this aspect of Nicander's poetics as theatricality of intense *pathos*.[402]

Another category of *enargeia* in which pictorial realism plays a part, is the depiction of natural beauty. Although most plants and herbs are summed up in long lists, devoid of colourful adjectives or clauses, occasionally attention is paid to the luxurious appearance of a plant, or the scenery surrounding it.[403] *Ther.* 59–62 thus paint the beauteous habitat of the mint with plenty of detail: 'the water-loving, leafy mint is found among the eddies of some rushing river, for it grows in plenty by streams and is fed with the moisture about

399 For a thorough discussion of the sensational aspect of Nicander's poetry, concerned with all kinds of sensory perceptions, see Sistakou 2012, 193–250.

400 For an analysis of Nic.'s fascination with the poisoned body see Sistakou 2012, 234–250.

401 Toohey 1996, 62. Cf. Sistakou (2012, 209): "Macabre is not just a theme but a prevailing mood" Sistakou also rightly points out Nicander's morbid aestheticism, interweaving "the affective along with the scientific" (2012, 222).

402 Spatafora 2005, 257.

403 For this category of 'la bellezza floreale' see Spatafora 2005, 232–240.

their edges, as it delights in gleaming rivers'. The pleasant setting of plants in a surrounding rich in water is found in *Ther.* 537–538 as well ('*helxine* … which delights in streams and flourishes ever in water-meadows'), and in *Ther.* 65–69 ('wormwood, which grows wild upon the hills in some chalky glen, tufted thyme from pasture lands').

It is clear that Nicander aims at a high level of pictorial realism, ranging from numerous (though not necessarily correct) details of snakes, accounts of grave suffering using plenty details, and ample descriptions of natural scenery. Although the result may appear as a true to life report, what we really see is a world painted by a poet and therefore a world perceived through the poet's focus. It is the poet who decides the overall picture of the subjects described, thus portraying a world that appears to be ours, but is in fact a carefully constructed image, full of details that seem realistic, but sometimes verge on the veristic.

### Depiction of Low and Everyday Life

Nicander's world is not made up of mythical *loci amoeni*. His world does not consist of particularly appealing scenery, filled with shady brooks, lovely meadows with flowers, or groves with mysterious glades. Instead, it is a common world, inhabited by townsmen, farmers, herds and fishermen. Although gods and heroes do appear in the *Theriaca*, they do not detract from the sense of everyday life the poem breathes. Such a portrayal of everyday life in poetry is typical of Alexandrian poetry, and typical of Hellenistic art in general.[404] This is not to say that Nicander's aim was to write a poem about common people, yet his depiction of them is relevant to the general depiction of his world nonetheless.[405] In the *Theriaca* such depictions of scenes from daily life have several functions. Like mythological digressions they provide brief but effective breaks from potentially tedious listings. They keep the technical contents from getting too detached from real life by reminding the reader that Nicander's world is part of our real world—albeit on the outskirts—, not part of the realm of epic narrative or myth. They underline the fragility of man, picturing humble countrymen as victims of dangerous animals, not as armed heroes out to fight dragons. Nicander's world is inhabited neither by leisurely bucolic

404 For the inclination for realism and the depiction of everyday life in Hellenistic literature and art see e.g. Hughes Fowler 1989, Zanker 2004. Characteristic is the interest of sculptors in the depiction of humble folk, the grotesque, and the burlesque. Unlike the ideals of the Classical Period, the Hellenistic aesthetic found room for ordinary people as well.

405 Cf. Zanker 1987, 100.

characters who spend their time singing and exchanging gifts, nor by larger than life warriors, impervious to danger. Nicander's depictions are presented in a casual manner, occasionally providing a vista to the simple life of common people. Right from the start of the proem Nicander manages to set out the stage: ploughmen, herdsmen, woodcutters and dangerous animals inhabit the same world of fields and forests. Poisonous animals are not depicted as appearing in children's tales, but as entities in the real world of everyday, the world of farmers and βάναυσοι. Apart from ploughmen (4, 6), herdsmen (5, 48, 49, 74, 473, 554, 898), and woodcutters (6, 377), we also come across fishermen (on the shore 704, 793; out at sea, 823), harvesters (752), beekeepers (808), threshers (29, 114), tanners (423), a spearmaker (170), people suffering from chilblains (382, 682), little boys playing pranks (880), and perfumers (103), all normal people living in an everyday world, a world that is moreover represented both by urban (viz. perfumers, perhaps tanners) and rural representatives.[406] We find the homely image of moths circling round a lamp (760), we feel the summer heat (23–24, 368), and we picture a boat towed at sea (268).

Herdsmen and rustics not merely act as props in the poet's vistas of everyday life. They are part of a larger evocation of nature, and the natural world that constitutes the poem's stage. As such, the world depicted in the *Theriaca* not only shares many features with Hesiod's world as depicted in the *Works and Days*, but also with Theocritus' bucolic poems. The countryside, featuring shepherds and animals, is markedly natural, as opposed to life in the city, which so prominently sets the stage in most of Theocritus' non-bucolic poems. But whereas in Theocritus' bucolic poems a positive world is depicted, a world in which there is ample occasion for song, piping, merrymaking, leisure, and *eros*, Nicander succeeds in painting its negative aspects. Natural danger, markedly absent in Theocritus' bucolic poems, is the *Theriaca*'s prime concern.[407] In fact, in most descriptions of nature Nicander seems to have consciously pictured an anti-bucolic world, subverting the image of the *locus amoenus*. Already in the proem (5–7) we learn that the forest is no safe place for a cowherd, sleeping out in the open in the countryside is ill-advised (21–27), and the shepherds in the tall pine-forests (472–473) who cool themselves during a welcome break from work in the scorching heat of midday—an image both bucolic and reminiscent of the *locus amoenus*—should beware of snakes lusting for sheep.[408]

406 Cf. Touwaide 1991, 83.

407 See, however, Overduin 2014.

408 See also notes on *Ther*. 197, 472, and 880 in the commentary.

### Veracity of Myths

Before the Alexandrian age the representation of myth in poetry had already been criticized as problematic by some. Pindar, in his first *Olympian Ode*, states that he considers the story of the ivory replacement of Pelops' shoulder an exaggeration, an embellishment meant to charm.[409] Such voices, finding fault with stories that were not uniformly presented, allowed for different versions, or lacked the necessary veracity in their presentation, become stronger among the the Alexandrian poets, particularly Callimachus and Apollonius, who paid special care to the element of mythical credibility. Their works are equally engaged with myth as those of earlier poets, but what sets them apart is the attention paid to detail, thematizing these problems. They do not allow for multiple variants, but present the version that is most probable, or invoke external authorities to show that the poet cannot be blamed for indulging in poetical licence.[410] The underlying thought of this scrupulousness is the idea that good stories are good because they are told coherently and veraciously, not because they are true or false.[411] The Argo can be presented as a talking ship, so long as Apollonius succeeds in giving us the impression—through a detailed account—of the truthfulness of such an off-beat given.

Although the mythical aspect of the *Theriaca* is limited in scope, the poet's presentation follows the line of the Alexandrians. In the mythological transition following the proem we learn of the mythical origin of reptiles and spiders (8–12). Although this unlikely story is a valuable contribution to the poem, Nicander makes sure to safeguard himself by claiming Hesiod as his authority: the reader should not get the impression Nicander is making up stories here. Moreover, he hedges his bets by adding εἰ ἐτεόν περ ('if indeed he spoke the truth'). Such additions (invoking authority, prudent reasoning) help to convey an image of veracity: to us Nicander seems to have done his homework. In addition to claiming authority, much of Nicander's dealings with mythology are connected to aetiology. The second part of the mythological transition, dealing with Artemis' punishment of Orion (13–20) ends with a reference to the

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409 Pi. *O.* 1.28–32. Cf. *N.* 7.20–27, where Homer is criticized for portraying Odysseus more favourably than Ajax, thus misrepresenting the truth. Similar criticism is found in Heracl. fr. B 42 and 56 DK, Xenoph. fr. 15 Gentili-Prato (= 11 DK), and Pl. *Resp.* 377d.

410 Examples can be found in Zanker 1983, 129–131, e.g. Call. *Jov.* 58 ff., where the poet finds it highly implausible that something as important as the division of the different realms of the gods would have been decided by lot.

411 As reflected in Aristotle's *dictum* that in poetry the impossible but credible is preferable to the possible but incredible (πρός τε γὰρ τὴν ποίησιν αἱρετώτερον πιθανὸν ἀδύνατον ἢ ἀπίθανον καὶ δυνατόν, *Poet.* 1461b11); cf. Zanker 1983, 129–130.

hunter's catasterism. Here we have another claim to veracity, as Orion's sign is still here for us to see (τοῦ δὲ τέρας περίσημον ὑπ' ἀστέρας ἀπλανὲς αὔτως | … ἀείδελον ἐστήρικται, 19–20), hence 'proving' the truth of the story.

The aetiology about the crooked movement of the *cerastes* ('hornviper') in 309–310 shows a similar approach. Although Nicander is prudent enough to start with εἰ ἔτυμον ('if the tale be true'), his version—although differing from other accounts—makes perfect sense within the *Theriaca*.[412] The element of mythical veracity holds true for geographical references as well. Interspersed between actual places (the river Pontus, Phalacra, Rhype) we find mythical sites. A certain part of Thrace is referred to as the site where the 'oaks of Oeagrus' son' are. Here Nicander employs Orpheus as an authentic mythical character, the result of whose works can still be observed today. The rivers Drilon and Naron in Illyria are called the abode of Cadmus and Harmonia (607–608), who, turned into snakes, chose these riverbanks as their quarters. The use of the present (νομὸν στείβουσι, 'they move about the pastures', 609) is significant here, as it suggests they can still be seen today.[413] Whether or not the cave of Zerynthus (462–464) really exists, and whether Nicander ever went to visit it himself is ultimately irrelevant. As a veracious description of the region of Thrace it suffices, and is thus part of Nicander's extensive use of *enargeia*.

In his presentation of myths Nicander moves thoughtfully. He makes sure that all mythical details are to the point, refrains from obvious and hackneyed stories, but most of all, he presents his myths as plausible. This plausibility is essential within the careful construction of the poem, in which no detail should disturb the overall picture of truthfulness. The result is a poem in which an image of veracity prevails to such an extent that even myth corroborates the picture of life-like presentation.

### 8.3 *Aetiology and Mythology*

The previous section obliquely dealt with aetiology as a means of achieving *enargeia*: through the alteration or selective presentation of a myth a link can be established with the present, thus adding to the veracity and credibility of the poem as a whole. Yet within the perimeter of Hellenistic poetry, aiming at veracity is not necessarily a goal in itself. Although the aetiological game, if played well, lends credibility to the stories presented, it often seems to be

412 A similar use of εἰ ἔτυμον is found in *Ther.* 309.

413 Although the Scironian cliffs on the border of Attica and Megaris, mentioned in *Ther.* 214, are real, their etymology, hinting at the Megarian villain Sciron who worked his evil at that particular spot, shows aetiological awareness too; cf. note on *Ther.* 703.

employed for the sake of aetiology itself.[414] Fascination with the origins of customs, words and traditions does not need to serve an external purpose, and when it does, it can be valued as a display of learning, without aiming at credibility. The element of learning in this case does usually not apply to widely shared knowledge of archaic lore, but to aetiologies that were previously unknown.[415] Whichever reason a poet has for paying such close attention to details of this nature, as a structural element it is highly characteristic of Alexandrian poetry.[416]

Although mythology and aetiology do not necessarily depend on each other, they often coincide.[417] This is also the case in the *Theriaca*, where most of the mythological references are linked to single or multiple aetiologies. Characteristic throughout is Nicander's preference for unknown or lesser known myths, or versions of myths not attested elsewhere.[418] The treatment of myths can be divided in (i) the motif of the *protos heuretes*, (ii) *aetiological mythology*, and (iii) *non-aetiological mythology*.

### The *Protos Heuretes*-Motif

A typical shape of the aetiological relation between present and past is the incorporation in a text of a so-called *protos heuretes* (πρῶτος εὑρετής), 'first finder', a mythical or (semi-)historical character or group credited with the invention of a certain phenomenon. Such characters are not always inventors in the Daedalian sense (i.e. people who have the intention to do or make an invention), but sometimes individuals who accidentally discover or initiate a certain object or institution.[419] Such inventions, occasioning customs or

414 The motif of aetiology as a literary game holds true for the Hellenistic period in particular, although one should not overlook the political or cultural relevance that underlies many of the Alexandrian aetiologies, especially those related to the origins of cities; Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 49–50. Aetiology in the archaic in classical period appears to have been been more genuinely motivated, often related to cult and religion; see Fantuzzi 1996, 369–371. For an overview of poetical aetiology in classical literature see Loehr 1996, 1–160.

415 As Fantuzzi points out, this is particularly evident in Callimachus' *Aetia*, of which virtually none of the aetiologies are attested earlier.

416 For references to the study of aetiology before the Hellenistic era see Fantuzzi & Hunter 2004, 49. For aetiology in Hellenistic literature see Frazer 1967, 513–514, 522–523, 545–546, 775; Hutchinson 1988, 93–96.

417 As Buxton (2009, 110) points out, the Hellenistic appreciation of both metamorphosis myths and aetiology are two sides of the same coin, rather than separate fields of interest.

418 For recondite mythology as a characteristic of Hellenistic poetry in general cf. Gow 1952b, 1–2.

419 For Daedalus as an intentional and self-conscious inventor see D.S. 4.76.

objects still known today, are often eponymous. The phenomenon becomes a topos from the fifth century BCE on, but can be pointed out in earlier texts as well.[420] Different types of *primus inventor* can be distinguished, but most relevant for the *Theriaca* is the mythical inventor, be it heroic or divine.[421] The inclusion of aetiological references to a *protos heuretes* seems to serve multiple purposes. It displays an interest in the origins of modern customs, but at the same time underlines the status of the poet as a man of learning, showing interest in his material beyond superficial enumerations. In addition, the inclusion of the topos helps to establish a connection with contemporary, i.e. Hellenistic, literary fashion in which aetiology plays an important role, and with past poets writing in the same tradition. What matters here is of course not the question whether or not a particular inclusion is correct: most, if not all, references to first finders are incorrect or, rather, display a misguided concept of history.[422] What matters is the fascination of many Greek authors with first finders, and their inclusion as a literary topos.[423]

It is probably not insignificant that the earliest *protos heuretes* occurs in the poetry of Nicander's literary forebear Hesiod. There we find Prometheus as the one who initiated the offering of white bones covered in animal fat to the

420 See Kleingünther 1933, 26; Baumbach 2001, 466–467. The phenomenon is first attested in Phoronis fr. 2 *PEG* (*EGF*), who tells us that the sorcerers of Ida were the first to discover the art of metallurgy (οἳ πρῶτοι τέχνην πολυμήτιος Ἡφαίστοιο εὗρον). Famous examples are Triptolemus, who was the first to learn the art of agriculture (cf. S. fr. 596–617a Radt), Daphnis, who invented the bucolic song (D.S. 4.84.3), Diomus, who is credited with the same invention (Ath. 14.619ab), Hermes, who first invented the seven-string lyre (*h.Merc.* 47–54), and Athena, who invented the flute (Pi. *P.* 12.6 ff.). In the Alexandrian era we find Phanocles' presentation of Orpheus as the *protos heuretes* of paederasty (*CA* 1.9–10, p. 107), and Apollo as the (other) inventor of the seven-string lyre (Call. *Del.* 253–254)—ignoring the alternate tradition of Hermes as the *primus inventor*; see also Plin. *Nat.* 7.191–241 and Hyg. 274 and 277.

421 Examples of (semi-)historical *protoi heuretai* are the singer Arion, who initiated the dithyramb (Hdt. 1.23), Thespis, who was the first *hypocrites*, thus initiating drama (*TrGF* I 1 T 2), Terpander, who is credited with several musical inventions (Terp. test. 25 Gostoli = [Plu.] *Mus.* 28.1140f), Pherecydes of Syrus, who was the first author to write in prose (fr. 2 Schibli = A2 DK), Cadmus of Miletus, who was the first historian (Plin. *Nat.* 7.205), and Glaucus of Chius, who invented the art of welding iron (Hdt. 1.25).

422 E.g. the particularly unlikely designation of Nausicaa as the *primus inventor* of the ball-game in *Od.* 6.100–101, as found in Athenaeus (1.14d), who cites the otherwise unknown Corcyrean grammarian Agallis as his source.

423 The use of the *primus inventor* for political purposes, e.g. Euripides' restricted use of purely Attic *heuremata* (*Tr.* 799 and 1433) does not play a role in the *Theriaca*; cf. Kleingünther 1933, 91.

gods (Hes. *Th.* 556–558), and the one who first brought fire to mankind (*Op.* 50–52).[424] His counterpart Epimetheus is credited too, albeit less favourably, as the one who brought evil among mankind by accepting Pandora (*Th.* 511–512). By contrast, mock-heroic is the depiction of the poor peasant Molorcus in Callimachus' *Aetia*, who invents the mouse-trap as a means of ridding himself of nibbling mice (fr. 54c Harder = *SH* 259 = 177 Pf.). Though these examples differ in tone, relevant for both is their awareness of an origin in the mythical past. This is evident for the primeval Prometheus, but Molorcus too is placed in the distant past, since on the occasion of the invention he hosts Heracles, who is on his way to kill the Nemean lion.

The *Theriaca*, following both the Hesiodic and the Alexandrian tradition, comprises several instances of the *protos heuretes*-motif, all rooted in the mythical past.[425] Their appearance is usually brief and elliptical, yet easily recognisable.[426] In *Ther.* 500–502 the addressee is instructed to pick the root of Cheiron, named eponymously after the famous Centaur who found it somewhere on the top of Mount Pelion.[427] In *Ther.* 685–686 we learn that the 'Phlegyan all-heal' (πάνακες Φλεγυήιον) was first found (ὅ ῥά τε πρῶτος | … ἄμερξεν) by the mythical healer Paieon near the river Melas. Here too the location, however imprecise, appears to be part of the topos. In this case the occasion is explicated: Paieon attended to Iphicles' wound, who was injured by the Hydra when assisting Heracles. Paieon instantly and intuitively pulled out the medicinal root from the soil, thus inventing a cure, although Nicander's typical elliptical style withholds some of the details. Another—ostensibly mythical—character credited as a *primus inventor* is the otherwise unknown Alcibius, who is responsible for two inventions. In 541–549 Alcibius, bitten by a viper while sleeping near a threshing floor, pulls a root from the ground, chews on it, sucks out the juice, and presses the remains on the wound. The treatment, which was apparently successful, occasioned coining the root Alcibius' bugloss (Ἀλκιβίου ἔχιος … ῥίζαν). In *Ther.* 666–677 we find Alcibius again, but this time it is his dog which gets

424 In Aeschylus Prometheus' inventions include many more, as he himself boasts in *PV* 442–506; cf. τοιαῦτα μηχανήματ' ἐξευρὼν τάλας | βροτοῖσιν (*PV* 469–470).

425 Nicander's interest in the motif also appears from fr. 86 G-S (Ath. 2.35a) from the *Georgica*, where Oineus is depicted as the first to make wine, Οἰνεὺς δ' ἐν κοίλοισιν ἀποθλίψας δεπάεσσιν | οἶνον ἔκλησε ('And Oineus squeezed it out into hollow cups and called it *oinos*').

426 E.g. through markers such as ποτε (501, 835), πρῶτος (685) etc.

427 The root κενταύριον, as described by a.o. Theophrastus (*HP* 3.3.6). The association between Cheiron and the art of healing is already found in Homer (*Il.* 11.830–832, cf. [Hes.] fr. 204.87 MW = 110 Hirschberger, Hes. *Th.* 1001 et al.).

bitten during hunting. Immediately it eats the leaves of a plant that will be known as Alcibius' herb from that moment on, and consequently escapes death.[428]

In addition to these four cases of evident *protoi heuretai* there are two more possible instances. In 439 Nicander tells us of the so-called dragon, which was once fostered by Paieon, the god of healing (who reappears in 686), in a leafy oak in the valley of Pelethronius on the snow-capped Pelion. This is not an aetiological story, as nothing is explained, nor is Paieon presented here as a *primus inventor*. Yet the elements are strikingly similar to the previous instances: a divine character in the mythical past (cf. ποτε in 439), a brief excursus occasioned by the treatment of a contemporary phenomenon, a detailed description of the setting, but any causal relation is lacking. Could this be an instance where Nicander's information is simply too elliptical for us? Perhaps the aetiology only eludes us because we lack the knowledge of a commonly known treatment of the story elsewhere. Another case is 627, where the addressee is instructed to take heed of a plant known as Heracles' origanum (Ἡράκλειον ὀρίγανον). Whereas nothing else is said, Heracles is, arguably, named as the inventor, and hence eponymous of this plant, although an aetiological reference or causal relation is lacking.

### Aetiological Mythology

Apart from aetiologies concerned with pinpointing the discoveries made by certain named individuals, the *Theriaca* comprises several other aetiologies, all originating from myths. The first is found in the mythological transition following the proem and tells us of the creation of snakes, spiders, reptiles and the like, born from the Titans' blood (8–10). Again, the origination is set in primeval mythical times. The story is followed by the aetiology of the catasterism of Orion, which is told in Nicander's elliptical style. We do not hear why Orion was granted a place among the stars, which is unlikely to have been warranted by his indecent assault of Artemis (13–16). Moreover, the catasterism of the avenging scorpion sent by Artemis (17–18) is not mentioned at all. The addressee is to deduce himself that both the constellations of Scorpio and Orion, the former perennially chasing the latter, are aetiologically linked to the myth presented here by Nicander.

In 309–319 the poet tells us the story of Helen and Menelaus who land in Egypt on their return from Troy. Here too the myth serves to introduce an aeti-

428 The plant's exact name remains unclear. The Greek only tells us there is 'another herb named after Alcibius' (Ἄλλην δ' Ἀλκιβίοιο φερώνυμον … ποίην, 666).

ology. It accounts for the death of the helmsman Canobus, for the eponymous location of Canobus in the Egyptian delta, and for the halting movement of the *cerastes*, which was punished by Helen for causing the death of Canobus. The myth is told in such a way that it fits smoothly into the poem, but does not fail to present us with multiple aetiologies. The compound aetiology in 343–354 follows the same approach. Here Nicander tells the story of how mankind lost the precious gift of Youth which was presented to them by Zeus as a reward for the fact that they had betrayed Prometheus. The gift is tied to the back of an ass, who runs off in thirst and begs a snake, guarding a pool of water, for a drink. The snake (a *dipsas*, 'thirst-snake') turns the request into a deal: it gets the gift of Youth—together with the ass' thirst—whereas the ass is granted access to water; Youth is, however, forever lost to mankind. Again, a single story contains multiple aetiologies. It explains why, having wasted Youth, we have to get old, why the *dipsas* causes thirst, why snakes can rejuvenate themselves endlessly (or so it seems), and, implicitly, why to this day the ass has to suffer being a beast of burden. The next myth deals with the boy Ascalabus, who angers the grieving Demeter and is turned into a gecko as a punishment (483–487). The story has several layers of relevance for the *Theriaca*, but its prime concern is again aetiology, explaining the existence and appearance of the gecko.

### Non-Aetiological Mythology

Not all of the mythological references are of an overt aetiological nature. In 902–906 the treatment of the hyacinth triggers the story of the death of Hyacinthus at the hands of Apollo during a game of discus-throwing. Despite the fact that the story offers two obvious opportunities for aetiological explanations—viz. the boy is turned into the flower still known to us; its leaves still show the letters AIAI as a sign of the boy's sorrow—no such connection is made, other than the adjective πολυθρήνου ('much lamented'). The reference to the death of Odysseus caused by the poison of the stingray (835) is not motivated aetiologically either, and the same goes for the mythological reference to Cadmus and Harmonia in 608. The presence of these myths in the *Theriaca* is not to be explained aetiologically, but thematically, as they are related to the poem's key subjects: plants (as in the Hyacinth myth), poison (as in the reference to Odysseus), and snakes (connected to Cadmus and his wife, who were turned into snakes).

Here too we see that Nicander has inserted myths into his poem that serve a particular purpose. These myths, even if they do not give aetiological explanations, still serve to touch on themes relevant to the poem's subject, and are thus illustrations of the poet's carefully devised plan: a polished poem, rich in literary elements, with multiple mythical allusions functioning on different levels.

### 8.4 *Comical Elements*

The *Theriaca* does not strike the modern reader as a particularly comical work.[429] Indeed, the enumerations can be tedious at times, and when there is room for distraction this usually consists of gruesome details or learned aetiological mythology. But while the *Theriaca* gives one the impression of a particularly serious poem throughout, there are a few passages that are somewhat lighter in tone. To be sure, the *Theriaca* is in no way facetious or even hilarious, nor can it be considered a parody that is grave in tone but has to be read as tongue-in-cheek didactic.[430] For although it may seem ludicrous, especially to a modern reader, to capture as dull a subject as the *Theriaca*'s into a poem, it lacks an essential quality of parody or comedy, viz. humour.[431] The *Theriaca* is not a humourous poem itself, nor is humour used in connection with the literary tradition of contemporary science, or archaic didactic.

But although the image of the world pictured by Nicander as a grim and serious one is maintained throughout the *Theriaca*, occasionally we find images that are light enough to provide some relief from the poet's morbidity. In 190–199 Nicander gives a description of the *ichneumon* ('mongoose'), a small animal that lusts after the eggs of the asp. The creature is described in 195 as an ἰχνευτής ('tracker', 'hunter'), a noun commonly used to indicate tracker dogs. This comical presentation of the small creature as a fierce dog is underlined by the description of its appearance, as it is said to be like a puny marten (195–196). In 411 Nicander starts his description of the *dryinas* ('oak-snake') or *chelydrus* ('land-watersnake'). This dreadful monster (said to cause κήρ, 'doom', a markedly grave word) is said to roam the marshes and lakes to wreak havoc on other animals. Yet this mighty monster itself runs off in fear of the gadfly and cowardly hides in hollow oaks (417–419). The roles are reversed, the fearful

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429 'Comical' here refers to light or jocular elements in the modern sense; in the context of this section it bears no relation to the genre of comedy as practiced in the Greek and Roman theatre.

430 As a genre epic parody seems to have flourished from the fifth century BCE on, stemming from the works of comic poets; Olson & Sens 1999, 7. Evident examples are the anonymous *Batrachomyomachia* and the substantial fragment of Matro's dinner-party transmitted in Athenaeus (Matro fr. 1 Olson-Sens = *SH* 534). Closer to the didactic tradition is the *Hedypatheia* of Archestratus, which is less of a parody, and more of a comical (i.e. closer to Greek comedy) didactic poem. Although it is not a mere versification of a cookbook, it somewhat resembles the *Theriaca*, as it takes a literary approach to prosaic material at hand.

431 Cf. Olson & Sens 1999, 5.

snake being comically chased off by a little insect. In 671 Nicander describes one of Alcibius' hunting dogs, which is bitten by a snake. Although the dog is whimpering in anguish and shows no signs of bravery whatsoever, it is yet called θυμολέων ('lion-hearted') in 671. The connotation of the high-blown epithet is thus comically debunked by the context in which the poet presents it.

In 682–683 we learn that the root of the navelwort is a servicable cure against chilblains. Unpleasant as such an affliction may be, it does strike us as a small inconvenience, particularly in a context of lethal bites and the agony of poisoning by snakes or scorpions. Similarly the burning sensation of a stinging-nettle, described as part of a boy's game in 880 may be unpleasant, but to call its seed ὀλοός ('destructive', 'deadly') is evidently a comical exaggeration. The poet's attention for such disproportionate afflictions thus adds a comic touch. Comical in a slapstick vain is Nicander's description of the reaction of some fishermen to a moray (822–825). As the creature suddenly jumps up the fishermen panic and jump overboard, scared out of their wits. In 703 we learn of other fishermen, who draw a sea-turtle onto land. The animal is killed for its blood, which has a medicinal use, and is otherwise not described as being dangerous in any way. Yet it is given the adjective βροτολοιγός (703), 'murderous', which does not follow from the context. Nicander has been so eager to paint a grim picture of animals that in the course of the poem all animals have become vile monsters, which gives his descriptions at times a comical touch. Similarly, animals as the centipede, which is presented as contriving evil plans (811), and the shrewmouse (815), who may be blind and puny, but is still called σμερδνός ('terrible', 'fearsome') add to a comically overstated depiction of the dangerous world of animals.[432]

Although the *Theriaca* is obviously not a comical poem, the elements described above make clear that the poet has given the lighter aspects of his account some attention as well, in order to create some balance, particularly in long sections that mainly consist of enumerations of plants. The result is therefore clearly different from a plain medical treatise in which such elements are not to be expected. The poet has used a lighter touch to add to a sense of perspective, a relief from his grave tone, and consequently a poem that is more enjoyable for the reader.

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432 Cf. Overduin 2009a, 79–93.

## 8.5 *Learned Topography*

Another interesting motif within Nicander's poetics is his concern with learned topography.[433] This, of course, is neither typical of Nicander, nor restricted to the *Theriaca*, but may well be considered typical of much Alexandrian poetry in general, with Callimachus and Apollonius as its most prominent proponents. Such an interest, as reflected in the poem, can be motivated by several considerations: the poet displays his wide knowledge of lesser known regions, at the same time showing his equality to his peers, and impressing his audience with his learnedness. To an audience of Hellenistic readers such information must have appealed to their interest in the past, a past connected with the 'old' Greek world of the era before Alexander's conquests. As such, Nicander's use of Greek geography reflects a sense of antiquarianism found in some of the Alexandrean poets as well. In addition, such information adds to the credibility of his account, for although few of Nicander's readers would be able to tell exactly to which places Nicander is referring, they would surely consider his information to be emanations of his wide erudition and knowledge of the world.

Thus we find references to places both far off and nearby time and again. Connected to the 'old' world of the archaic and classical periods of Greek history and literature are the steeps of Melisseeis (11) and the waters of Permessos (12), the well Callichorum (486), the Laconian city of Amyclae and its river (904; cf. 670), the Thracian Gulf (459–460) with the isle of Samothrace (459), the cave of Zerynthus (462) and Zone (461), the Thracian rivers Pontus (49) and Hebrus (461), the rivers Cnopus (889), Schoeneus (889) and Psamathe (887) in Boeotia, next to the Boeotian towns of Trephea (887) and Copae (888), Mount Ida (585), Pelethronius (440), Mount Pelion (502), the mountains of Sciron and Pambonia (214) in Attica, the Epirotic harbour city of Oricus (516), Thessalian Corope (613), Rhype and Corax (215) in Aetolia, Locrian Aselenus (215), and the hills of Othrys (145) in Phtiotis. Closer to Nicander's hometown are the river Caÿster (635), Bucarterus (217), Aesagea and Cercaphus (218), the cliffs of Phalacra (668), the plain of Crymna (669), and Grasus (669). Connected to the exotic regions beyond the boundaries of ancient Greece are the Illyrian rivers Drilon and Naron (607), the Indian Choaspes (890), the delta of Thonis in Egypt (313), the graves of Tmolus and Gyges in Lydia (633), as well as the rock of Parthenius and the Lydian meadows of Cilbis (634). Many of the references to such sites come in clusters, like the eight different places (within six lines) that serve to describe the region of Thrace in 458–462. Similarly the discus-

433 Cf. Spatafora 2005, 248–256.

sion about the European and Asian variant of a certain snake yields a cluster of eight different sites within five lines (214–218); cf. 633–635, 668–669, and 887–890. Such clusters ostensibly serve to pinpoint certain locations, but are no less relevant in impressing the audience with the enumeration of exotic sites one after the other, craftily fitted into hexameters.[434]

### 8.6 *The* Theriaca *and the Paradoxographical Tradition*

As we have seen, the *Theriaca* is essentially a didactic poem, both in the Hesiodic and the Aratean tradition. The poem does comprise, however, various elements that stem from the tradition of paradoxography.[435] Although the tradition of the 'wonder-book', consisting of collections of popular belief, may not have been precisely delineated and is interwoven with mythography, historiography, and scientific writings, our collections point at authors who were interested in treating all kinds of miraculous elements, usually containing a kernel of truth.[436] Although the paradoxographical collection attributed to Antigonus of Carystus (third century BCE), which contains dozens of fragments dealing with natural oddities, is Byzantine, its contents date back to antiquity.[437] From

434 Such strings of topographical names give the impression they are based on their consecutive treatment in catalogues or in literature in the tradition of the *periplus*. While Nicander may well have relied on such material, too little remains to pinpoint a particular source, e.g. by comparing collocations of placenames in earlier or contemporary literature.

435 See Schepens & Delcroix 1996. The term is not antique. It was first used by Johannes Tzetzes (*Chiliades* 2.35.151), albeit without being very precise, to indicate (prose) literature dealing with *mirabilia*. Interestingly, Tzetzes is known to have written scholia on the *Theriaca*, his knowledge of which may have shaped his idea of paradoxography. The term can be used both in relation to authors who took an interest in strange phenomena of all kinds, and to those who wrote works dedicated singularly to the phenomenon. Among the latter Callimachus seems to have initatiated the genre (if it should be considered a proper genre), as follows from fr. 407 Pf. (= [Antig.] 129–173 Musso), which mentions a Θαυμάτων τῶν εἰς ἅπασαν τὴν γῆν κατὰ τόπους ὄντων συναγωγή; cf. [Antig.] 129 Musso, πεποίηται δέ τινα καὶ ὁ Κυρηναῖος Καλλίμαχος ἐκλογὴν τῶν παραδόξων. For distinctions between paradoxography in the wider or narrower sense see Wenskus 2000, 309–311. Whether or not paradoxography should be considered a genre proper is hard to decide, but even if the concept of genre should not be applied, we can nevertheless discern a fascination among certain authors for *mirabilia*, and their keenness on collecting stories about them.

436 See Zanker 1987, 118.

437 The collection of miraculous stories (Ἱστοριῶν παραδόξων συναγωγή) falsely attributed to the biographer Antigonus of Carystus has turned out to be a mere collection of *excerpta*

the second century CE we have parts of the works of Phlegon of Tralles, and the work of Claudius Aelian (second-third century CE) shows signs of a similar interest. Others, such as Herodotus, though probably not aware of engaging in paradoxography, included passages in their works touching on the incredible and often impossible.[438] The genre, if one can call it that, is typically written in prose.

Although Nicander is primarily concerned with giving his audience the impression of writing a genuinely didactic poem, occasionally elements are included that touch on the incredible, and can be seen to be borrowed from earlier authors.[439] In *Ther*. 132–134 we learn that young vipers do not hatch out, but eat their way through their mother's womb, thus causing her death. Moreover, they do this in order to revenge their father's death, whose head is bitten off by the female right after it has mated with her. The phenomenon presented here is not new. It is discussed as a curiosity by Herodotus (3.109), who mentions it, together with the flying snakes of Arabia, as one of the marvels of India. The kernel of truth here lies in the distinction between oviparous snakes, as mentioned in *Ther*. 135–136, and the viviparous female viper. Yet the story of the avenging young vipers is obviously false.[440]

In *Ther*. 741–742 Nicander briefly refers to the phenomena of *hippogonia* and *bougonia*, the fantastic belief that wasps are born out of the carcasses of dead horses, and bees from dead cows. This too goes back to an earlier source, as

from various authors, probably compiled in the tenth century CE during the reign of Constantinus Porphyrogenetes; see Dorandi 1999, xiv–xvi.

438 Related is the genre of mythography, in which some authors, like Palaephatus (third or second century BCE), took a critical stance to what could be called 'mythical paradoxography', by supplying logical if unimaginative explanations for phenomena such as flying people (Icarus and Daedalus), seductive bulls walking on water (Zeus and Europa), and man-horses (Centaurs).

439 One should keep in mind the danger of an anachronistic approach to superstition and miracles. Stories that are considered old wives' tales to the modern ear may well have been considered credible in antiquity. The fact that such stories were collected does, however, show that they were considered highly extraordinary, and therefore perhaps considered to be on the verge of the plausible. At any rate they were probably read because of their sensational details, rather than being accounts of actually observed phenomena.

440 It is significant that the fascinating but false story is not found in Aristotle (who tells us all about the mating habits of snakes in *HA* 558a25 et al., but does not engage in sensationalism), but recurs in later paradoxographical writings; cf. [Arist.] *Mir*. 846b18, Ael. *NA* 1.24, 15.16.

it is told by ps.-Antigonus (19.4b.1 Musso).[441] Another fantastic variant of the unlikely creation of certain animals is found in 791–796, where we learn that a particular crab-like species of the scorpion is actually born from the crab. To this one can even add the origination of reptiles, snakes and spiders from the blood of the Titans in the proem (8–10). Although the story is of course mythical, it displays the same biological fascination for a miraculous kind of origination.[442]

In 372 we learn that the snake known under the name of *amphisbaena* has two heads, one at the far end of each side of its body, and is hence able to move in both directions. Such a snake does not exist, and its concoction is probably due to the fact that some types of snakes or worms have tails resembling flat heads.[443] Yet Nicander has no intention of sorting out the story behind the *amphisbaena*, and retains the implausible existence of such an animal.[444] In 397 an animal known as ἑρπηστῶν βασιλῆα ('King of Snakes') is presented, which seems to be a periphrasis for the basilisk. Although this animal could be an Egyptian cobra, others have suggested this too is a fantastic animal.[445] In 826 we learn of a curious pair: the female moray eel and the male viper, the former of which is said to abandon the sea in order to mate with the viper on the shore. This too appears as a *mirabilium* elsewhere, in Athenaeus' quotation of the *Deipnon* of Matro of Pitane (late fourth–early third century BCE), μύραιναν δ' ἐπέθηκε … εἰς λέχος … ἔβαινε Δρακοντιάδῃ μεγαθύμῳ, "[a cook] served a moray eel, … [who] went off to bed with the great-hearted Son of Serpent" (Matro fr. 1.73–75 Olson-Sens = *SH* 534 = Ath. 4.136b). The story of the phenomenon, already in antiquity exposed as fantastic, was widespread.[446] Aelian even goes

441 Both *hippogonia* and *bougonia* are part of a larger tradition of miraculous *goniai*. Cf. the third century BCE poet Archelaus, whose book Ἰδιοφυῆ ('Phenomena of a peculiar nature') contained many such elements; see *SH* 125–129. Concerning *hippogonia* and *bougonia* Aristotle is again (cf. previous note) prominently absent, despite his fascination for the generation of bees (*GA* 760b28 ff.); see Kitchell 1989, 194–195.

442 Cf. Cazzaniga 1975, 175, who pairs this '*haematogonia*' with *bugonia* and *hippogonia*.

443 Modern biology knows of an *amphisbaena*, which is not a two-headed monster, but a worm lizard, which has little to do with the serpent described by Nicander.

444 The animal appears in A. *Ag*. 1233, yet next to Scylla, which underlines its fantastic nature: it belongs to the realm of fiction, not biology.

445 See LSJ s.v. βασιλίσκος; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 178. For a more recent attempt at identification see Barbara 2006.

446 See Olson & Sens 1999, 115. The story is found in Ael. *NA* 1.50, 9.66, Sostratus (quoted in Ath. 7.312e), [Opp.] *C*. 1.381–382, Opp. *H*. 1.554–579, Plin. *Nat*. 9.76, 32.14 (with Aemilius Macer, an imitator of Nicander, as his source; see ch. 9). It is refuted in Ath. 7.312e by the physician Andreas; cf. Σ *Ther.* 823a.

so far as to compare the lusty viper going to the sea to find a moray eel to mate with, with a flute-playing reveller who simply knocks on the door, eager to get in (Ael. *NA* 1.50). In *Ther.* 200–205 we are given an explanation for the popular (though incorrect) belief that the *ichneumon* is impervious to a snake's poisonous fangs. According to Nicander the reason for this is that the animal covers itself with river mud, which, when dried in the hot Egyptian sun, turns its fur into an impermeable crust. This too appears to be one of the folk stories collected in the *mirabilia* of paradoxographers, and is as such transmitted by Aelian (*NA* 3.22).

Apart from animals we also find wonder-working stones, used for expelling snakes. One such stone is the Thracian stone (Θρήισσαν … λᾶαν, *Ther.* 45), apparantly a sort of inflammable quicklime that ignites when it comes in contact with water. Nicander tells us it is found by the river Pontus, but Aelian gives us the same information, claiming ps.-Aristotle's *Mirabilia* (841a27–32) as his source, although the author of the *Mirabilia* may have used the *Theriaca* in turn. The fascination with this particular property of the Thracian stone was widespread, and confirms Nicander's inclusion of the phenomenon as a *mirabilium*.[447] In 37 we find lignite, or the 'rock of Gagai' (ἐγγαγίδα πέτρην), another instance of a stone with special properties.

Although Nicander is not primarily concerned with the paradoxographical tradition, his ostensibly serious stance is never as rigid as Aristotle's, who simply does not take part in the report of unverified stories. The poet, however, does not object to the inclusion of spectacular yet incredible phenomena if such marvels add to poem's lurid or otherwise sensational atmosphere.

### 8.7 *Similes and Metaphors*

From the very beginning of Greek literature the simile has been distinguished as a marked feature of poetry in general, and epic poetry in particular. Although the subgenre of didactic epic is less concerned with the depiction of characters and actions through similes than narrative epic, the extant poems nevertheless portray a modest amount of similes, in addition to the related figure of metaphor.[448]

The *Theriaca* too comprises a number of similes and metaphors, which, like the inclusion of mythology and aetiology, ostensibly sets it apart from its original prose source and reveals that it is an expression of literature we are

447 It is mentioned in [Dsc.] *De lapidibus* 11, Gal. 12.203 Kühn, Alex. Aphr. *Pr.* 2.64.26, Eutecnius 24.12 Gualandri.

448 E.g. the use of νηὸς πτερά for the oars of a ship (*Op.* 628).

dealing with.[449] Most of these similes are very short.[450] Just a few of them exceed two lines, and none of them is an expanded simile of the Homeric type.[451] The instances of similes in the poem can be divided in two categories: those related to nature, and those in which parallels are drawn with elements that typically reflect human culture.

### Nature Similes

In *Ther.* 328–329 one of the symptoms of the putrefactive bite of the *sepedon* is described. The hair on the victim's skin withers and falls off, 'like rubbed thistledown' (ὡς γήρεια καταψηχθέντος ἀκάνθης). Apart from the apt comparison, the simile also evokes the time of autumn, when leaves and plants start to die, a gloomy perspective that applies to the victim no less than the plant. In 446 we find a simile in which the wound caused by the snake known as the dragon, which is all but harmless, is compared to that caused by a mouse; the fangs of the dragon are so slender that the wound on the skin looks as if it were bitten by a munching mouse. In 273 the look of livid blisters appearing on the skin as a result of a snakebite is compared to drops of rain. In 340 a victim of the bite of a *dipsas* ('thirst-snake') instantly starts drinking huge amounts of water to quench his insatiable thirst—in vain. The victim is then compared, in a simile, to a bull, standing at the edge of a stream, its head bowed down to drink from the water at its feet. It too takes in lots of water, gaping with open mouth (χανδὸν, 341) in order to drink as much as possible with each gulp. The simile is not only apt, but also gives a striking contrast between the rustic and pieceful image of a bull in its natural setting, and the victim, drinking like an animal, towards his horrifying and painful death.

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449 Cf. Schneider 1962, 105. Schindler (2000, 65–66) objects that similes are not intrinsically poetic, and are in fact often very prosaic, merely functional in conveying essential characteristics. Sensible as this may sound, she does not allow for poetically or otherwise aesthetically pleasing images *within* functional similes.

450 Schneider (1962, 101–109) distinguishes between 'sachlichen Vergleiche' (101–104) and 'poetischen Vergleiche' (105–109). Instances of the first type, usually very brief (e.g. *Ther.* 258–259, κεράστην | ἠύτ' ἔχιν, 'the cerastes, which [looks] like the viper') are purely practical and will not be treated here, as they lack a poetical dimension. They consist mainly of snakes compared to snakes, plants to plants, and symptoms to symptoms; see Schneider 102 n. 1.

451 As opposed to the *Alexipharmaca*, which comprises a perfect Homeric simile in 30–35, structured characteristically (e.g. *Il.* 11.305) as ὡς δ' ὁπότ' …, ὥς … In its lack of Homeric similes the *Theriaca* is thus again close to the *Works and Days* which equally lacks this poetic device.

### Similes Dealing with Human Culture

In *Ther*. 169–171 the frightening length of the asp, which measures an ὄργυια ('fathom', about 1,80 m), is paired with its considerable thickness, which is likened to that of a hunting-spear. To make the simile somewhat more evocative Nicander tells us that 'its thickness is seen to be that which a spear-maker fashions for a hunting spear for fighting bulls and deep-voiced lions' (transl. G-S). Although the details merely seem to give a good indication of its size, the simile touches on related images: other dangerous animals (bulls and lions), the struggle between man and beast, and the spear, being an instrument of war. Interestingly, at the same time these related images operate on a different level: Nicander's dangerous animals are of an entirely different nature. They cannot be hunted, and the otherwise mighty spear becomes a useless weapon when facing snakes, scorpions and spiders.[452]

In 421–422 the snake known as the *dryinas* is said to exhale a loathsome smell from its skin. The stench is subsequently likened to the smell coming from damp horse-skins at a tannery when the tanner's knife is scraping the leather. The brief simile is well-chosen, as it connects not only the snake's smell to that of tanning, but also draws a comparison between the snake's skin and the hide of the dead horse being processed. In 377–383 we learn of the medicinal use of the snake known as *amphisbaena*. When caught, the animal is stripped of its skin, which is applied to parts of the affected body afflicted by chilblains. In a simile the process of stripping the snake is compared to the way woodcutters cut walking-sticks from olive-branches. We probably have to picture the woodcutter stripping the branch by cutting off the bark in long strokes, all around the branch's core; the snake is ostensibly stripped in the same way. Just like the two previous examples, this simile evokes the world of artisans. Such similes are not a reflection of Nicander's intended audience, but rather a portrayal of the common world far from the poet's learned, and probably elitist, readers. Not unlike Hesiod Nicander is more interested in portrayal than proper instruction.[453]

Two similes are concerned with ships, although in a different way. In 266–270 the odd meandering movement of the snake known as the *cerastes* is likened to the movement of a dinghy in a gale. The progression of the light dinghy, towed by a larger ship, is thus dependent on the erratic tugging of the hawser, and

452 For the implicit poetical dimension of the comparison between the viper's shape and the spear see Schindler (2002, 67) who signals that the simile "eher zur Emotionalisierung als zur Erhellung des Lehrgegenstandes bei[trägt]".

453 For the idea of the *Works and Days* as a dramatic portrayal of a farmer's life instead of a poem of genuine instruction see Nelson 1996.

of the gusts of adverse wind whipping the sea. As a result the dinghy changes its direction constantly, with its sides often dipping deep into the water. This complex movement of shifting directions, tossing sides, and a capricious progression illustrates the snake's crawling in a far-fetched, yet original way. Different altogether is the simile between the movement of the centipede and that of a rowed ship in 814: 'as the creature moves there speed under its body as it were the winged oars of a ship' (νῄιά θ' ὡς σπέρχονται ὑπὸ πτερὰ θηρὶ κιούσῃ). The image of the dozens of legs of the centipede, moving, on both sides in pairs beneath its body in forward movement is not dissimilar to that of a Greek monoreme ship. Interestingly the noun used for oars (πτερά, 'wings' or 'feathers') is itself a metaphor, although it was probably a dead metaphor by Nicander's time.

In one simile the worlds of nature and culture are combined. In 195 the addressee learns that the appearance of the *ichneumon* (mongoose), which is apparently little known, is like that of a marten (ἴκτις). As a means of identifying the animal the simile merely seems to be purposeful, as the rarity of the word ἴκτις poses new problems for the addressee. Moreover, Nicander does not elaborate on the similarity in shape any further. The additions in 196–199 show that the parallel between the *ichneumon* (which wilfully breaks the asp's eggs on the ground with his teeth, a natural phenomenon) and the marten (which attacks roosting hens in their coop in their sleep) is in fact not restricted to their appearance, but extends to their character.[454] Just like the brooding asp is robbed of its eggs by the *ichneumon*, the roosting hens are robbed of their chicks by the prowling marten. The simile is thus turned into a double one, combining natural (similarity in appearance of two animals) and cultural elements (a chicken coop, the habitat of domestic chickens). In sum, many of the similes employed in the poem play with analogies between nature and culture. They help to bring the purely natural world of animal life closer to the world of humans, characterised by culture in the form of trade and craft. As the poet implicitly points out, the world of culture is the safe one, compared to the perennial dangers of nature.[455]

454 Cf. Schindler 2000, 67.

455 Such a positive appreciation of culture as opposed to the dangers of nature is already found in Homer. In the ninth book of the *Odyssey* we find a distinct contrast between the Cyclops, a representative of cruel and wild nature, as opposed to the crew of Odysseus, whose culture is represented by their knowledge of navigation, their rejection of cannibalism, and their possession of wine. For the concept of a systematic confrontation between nature and culture, as reflected in Greek myth, but also apparent in the *Theriaca*, see Kirk 1970, 162 ff.

Although similes could serve a clear didactic purpose in illustrating the matter at issue, Nicander's similes are mainly included for two other reasons.[456] (i) They function as structuring devices, often signalling the end of a subsection, in addition to providing distraction from the proper subject matter; just like the occasional aetiological or mythological reference, they attempt to prevent the listings from becoming too tedious.[457] (ii) Nicander's similes have a certain poetic impact, providing depth to the poem by evoking sites and images, thus adding to the status of the *Theriaca* as an artful piece of literature.[458]

Next to similes, most of which are quite original, the *Theriaca* contains many metaphors. In order to assess the poetical value of these many instances, however, two related issues need to be taken into account. First: most metaphors in the *Theriaca* do not strike us as highly original. Related to this observation is the second issue: many of the metaphors used give us the impression of being dead metaphors. This is not unproblematic, as it is often difficult to decide whether a certain metaphor was felt to convey a sense of originality, or had lost this sense long ago.[459] Occasionally we find the same metaphor in an older text, which in turn may depend on an even earlier attestation.[460] But often it is impossible to assess Nicander's use of metaphors as original or not.

The following metaphors are not found in earlier literature. In 71 ἐμπρίων, literally meaning 'sawing into', is used for the pungent smell of the plant known as 'stinking bean-trefoil'. In 91 στέρνον, literally 'breast', is used not for the seat of emotions in humans, but for the heart, i.e. inner core, of a mortar. In 119 σείρῃ, 'cord', 'rope', is used to refer to a snake's tail. In 203 Nicander uses τάρταρος to indicate the muddy bottom of a river, τάρταρος metaphorically referring to the lowest part of a place, the surface of the bottom which one cannot see, but knows to exist. In 275 we find αὐγή ('light of the sun') used in the plural for 'days',

456 For the idea of the technical functionality of similes in didactic poetry see Schindler 2000, 65–66.

457 For the use of similes as a structuring element cf. Schindler 2000, 66. Although this technique works better in the *Alexipharmaca* than in the *Theriaca*, we do find clear instances in *Ther.* 340 and 446.

458 Cf. Schindler 2000, 67–68.

459 This is the case for e.g. χείλη (61), χαίτῃ (65), ἐγκύμονι (89), χάλαζα (252), πεδόωσιν (427), ἐρέει (484), φόβην (564), καυλός (722), κραδίῃ (757), πτέρα (814), δάκρυα (907).

460 Thus ἄσπις (literally 'shield'), used as a noun for a cobra-like snake, based on the analogy between the shape of a shield and the hooded neck of the cobra (formed by extending the ribs of the neck) is technically a metaphor. Its use by Herodotus (4.191), however, who is not likely to have invented the metaphor, indicates that as a metaphor the noun had already lost its sense of originality in the fifth century BCE.

a self-evident, yet unique metaphor. In 367 the anger the *chersydrus*-snake portrays towards frogs is qualified as ἄσπειστος, literally 'not to be appeased by libations'. The idea of implacability here is evident, the image borrowed from the realm of human culture. But whether the metaphor is original, or even still felt as belonging to a different setting, is hard to decide. In 567 a hippopotamus' jaw is depicted as a ἅρπη ('sickle'), an apt metaphor in the context of an animal cutting off the vegetation of the ploughlands. In 672 Nicander uses the verb μεταλλεύω (literally 'get by mining') to refer to a hunter and his dogs, tracking out prey. They do not delve into the earth, yet the metaphor of pursuing the discovery of whatever one is looking for, seems apt and original. In 732 a victim suffering from the bite of a venomous spider is said to perceive 'night' (νύξ) around his temples. Although the use of νύξ for 'darkness' instead of 'night' is already a common metaphor in Homer, Nicander seems to use it for a diminishing perception of the senses; darkness not merely set on the eyes, but on the mind as well—hence the mention of temples (κροτάφοις, 732). In 824 the sudden jump of the moray eel, causing the fishermen to fall overboard, is described as ἐμπρήσασα, a verb literally expressing 'kindling', 'setting on fire'. Here the verb is used metaphorically to express the reaction of the fishermen, who act upon the moray eel's unexpected movement as if they were set on fire. In 854 Nicander refers to the first fruits of the fig-tree as κόκκυγας ἐρινάδος, literally 'cuckoos of the wild fig-tree', transferring a presumed characteristic of the cuckoo (viz. being born early in the season) to the fruit of the fig. In 882 the layers of the onion are designated as σπείρεα, 'coats', varying on the Homeric σπεῖρον, which is used for all kinds of wraps, pieces of cloth, and garments. In 892 myrtle-berries are given the adjective φιμώδεα, coined from φιμός ('muzzle', 'nose-band'). The essential quality of φιμός, i.e. being restrictive, is thus transferred to the berries, which have an astringent effect on the poisoned wound. See also the notes on βρῖθος (355), κατεχεύατο (437), πέσκος (549).

### 8.8 *Battle Imagery*

The large degree to which Nicander relies on Homer has been addressed repeatedly, pointing out the former's indebtedness with regard to language, intertexts, epic diction, metre and the like. As Touwaide points out, the Homeric nature of Nicander's poem is particularly evident in the close parallel between Homer's language and imagery of battle (particularly in the *Iliad*), and Nicander's depiction of the struggle between man and poisonous beast as a battle.[461]

461 Touwaide 1991, 86–88.

This is indeed one of Nicander's original approaches that is applied on a larger scale. Although aetiology and mythology are obviously relevant to Nicander's approach, they constitute single instances, rather than a continous theme. The image of battle, complete with the sense of imminent danger of assault and fear of dying, a concept of which actual encounters are only a small part, never leaves the reader. It is always in the background to resurface time and again, triggered by battle idiom derived from the *Iliad*.

This haunting sense of enmity is created through the persistent use of a wide range of negative vocabulary.[462] We find the adjectives κακοεργός (8, 111, 277, 746), κακοφθόρος (795), δόλιος (818), δολόεις (258), βλαβερός (121), ἐπιλωβής (35, 771), οὐλόμενος (100, 277, 357), οὐλοός (352, 759), οὖλος (233, 671), ἀπεχθής (483, 818), κακός (15, 116, 352, 436, 623, 629, 775), κακήθης (152, 360), βλοσυρός (336, 706), σμερδαλέος (144, 161, 207, 293, 765), σμερδνός (815) etc. Several words indicate doom, such as κήρ (35, 411, 540, 699, 813, 862, 920), κηριτρόφος (192), ἀκήριος (190), αἶσα (120, 281, 335, 800), μοῖρα (410, 768), θάνατος (120, 335, 410, 558, 768), ἄτη (100, 244, 304, 352, 436, 798, 865, 934). A sense of lurking and imminent danger is corroborated by the use the adjective ἀπροϊδής (2, 18). In terms of physical violence the persistent use of the verb τύπτω, often used in the *Iliad* to indicate striking with a sword or spear, places the *Theriaca* in an atmosphere of battle as well, cf. τύπτω (2, 313, 424, 775, 836), τύψις (921, 933), τύμμα (426, 737, 919, 930), τυπή (129, 358, 673, 784). Then there is the use of Homeric words typical of the battle itself: μῶλος, 'the turmoil of war' (201), οὐλαμός, 'a throng of warriors' (611), μόθος, 'battle din' (191), δύσδηρις, 'hard to fight with' (738) etc. Even in the descriptions of the animals themselves we find references to the arms of war. The scorpion's stinger is described as a κοπίς (780), normally a kind of axe or sword. Another species is said to be κεκορυθμένον (769), literally 'armed' with a stinger, and the pun ἰοδόκος (184), describing a snake's poisonous fangs, recalls the Homeric epithet for quiver. To be sure, not all battle idiom in the *Theriaca* is Homeric, for example in 379 where the verb σκυλεύω is used for the stripping of a snake's skin. This has close parallels to the despoiling of a slain enemy, taking off his arms after battle. In this way Nicander manages to bring about a rapport with Homer's depiction of human battle, transported to humans and animals. The descriptions of the symptoms too, as can be observed on the body, bear many similarities to descriptions of wounds from battle. The body is not merely overcome by an indefinite affliction, but has fallen prey to its natural enemy: poisoning, by those who bring it about.[463]

462 As collected by Touwaide 1991, 86–87; see also Overduin 2014.

463 Touwaide 1991, 88.

Far from presenting the reader with a neutral account of the natural behaviour of certain animals, the poet presents us a world in which snakes and scorpions do not attack on instinct, but go to war. Time and again Nicander shows us animals depicted as warriors, thus primarily invoking the mother of all epics: the *Iliad*. Through such battle-like connections to the war poetry of Homer Nicander not only aligns himself with the epic tradition and its master, but also steers away from the idea of a dull handbook on snakebites. It is in the reminiscences of Homer that the *Theriaca* becomes interesting, particularly for those able to spot the rare Homeric words used.

### 8.9 *Conclusion*

In his use of literary motifs as discussed above Nicander emerges as an author thoroughly concerned with the presentation of his material. Long sections on plants may give the poem the appearance of a dull list, but closer inspection reveals a myriad of ways in which Nicander has enhanced the quality of his poetry by means of literary devices. To the modern reader the result may still appear less than appealing, but one cannot deny, based on the elements discussed, that the poet made an effort to turn science into art. Nicander's use of similes and metaphors, though limited in frequency, serves to corroborate our view of Nicander as a poet, concerned with artistry even when dealing with markedly prosaic topics. Moreover, through his use of literary motifs Nicander has established connections with both archaic traditions (through his depiction of snakes and scorpions in Iliadic battle style), and with the Alexandrian tradition, in which mythology, aetiology, *enargeia* and learned topography are typical elements.

## 9 Dissemination and Reception

The *Theriaca* proved to be a minor success.[464] It never reached the popular status of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, exemplified by the many commentaries written on it and the many translations and adaptations in Latin (and eventually even one in Arabic), but it reached Rome and thus seems to have been known and read by at least a Roman elite.[465] Nicander's modest impact on both Greek

464 For the varying reception of the *Theriaca* from its origin to the modern age see Hatzimichali 2009.

465 Cf. Hollis 2007, 101–102. For the popularity of the *Phaenomena* see Bulloch (1985b, 59) and the various epigrams in praise or recognition of the *Phaenomena* (*AP* 4.1.49, 9.25, 507, 541,

and Roman authors and audiences can be divided in the following categories: readers of epic, epic poets, grammarians, scholarly authors dealing with biology and medicine, and Nicandrean scholars from the early modern period.[466]

### 9.1 *Readers of Epic*

The first Roman to mention Nicander is Cicero (*de Orat.* 1.69), who declares that, despite the fact that Nicander was a man very remote from rustic matters, he managed to compose skillful poetry on the subject all the same.[467] Cicero is probably not, however, referring to the *Theriaca*, but to Nicander's *Georgica*, which appears to have made more impact than his toxicological work.[468] Quintilian too expresses his feelings towards Nicander, with both the *Theriaca* and the *Georgica* in mind, and in his brief remark we can taste some appreciation for Nicander's originality and grace.[469] More appreciative is the anonymous author of *AP* 9.213 (*FGE* 1246–1249), who states that Nicander, just like his earlier townsman Homer, is dear to the Muses. In addition, both are considered

11.318, 12.1). We know of translations of the *Phaenomena* by Cicero (480 hexameters and some fragments survive), Germanicus, Avienus, Varro Atacinus (fr. 120–121 Hollis), and Ovid (fr. 1–2 Courtney), although some translations are reinterpretations, adapations, or abbreviations; for Germanicus' adaptation see Possanza 2004. Vergil (in the first book of the *Georgics*) and Manilius are indebted to Aratus too, as they used the *Phaenomena* as a source for their own works; see Fantuzzi 1996, 957–962.

466 Additional references in Touwaide 1991, 66–67. Apart from cursory points about the *Georgica* and *Alexipharmaca* I will not go into the dissemination of Nicander's other works, particularly the lost *Heteroeumena* (which was influential to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; this work is primarily known from its abridged prose adaptation as found in the third century CE mythographer Antoninus Liberalis; see Forbes-Irving 1990 *passim*; Cameron 2004, 299–301; Buxton 2009, 111–113), as it is not relevant to the *Theriaca*.

467 Cic. *de Orat.* 1.69, *Etenim si constat inter doctos, hominem ignarum astrologiae ornatissimis atque optimis versibus Aratum de caelo stellisque dixisse; si de rebus rusticis hominem ab agro remotissimum Nicandrum Colophonium poetica quadam facultate, non rustica, scripsisse praeclare*, […].

468 Nicander's *Georgica* (see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 144–161), comprising at least two books, seems to have been one of Vergil's influences in composing his own *Georgics*. Moreover, for the fourth book, dealing with apiculture, Vergil seems to be indebted to Nicander too, as the latter's *Melissurgica* appears to have provided Vergil with both the idea and the material. It is disputed, however, to which extent Nicander's influence went beyond triggering the idea of poetry on agriculture; see Thomas 1988a, 4–9. To judge from the larger extant fragments of the *Georgica*, it was stylistically very similar to the *Theriaca*.

469 Quint. 10.1.56, *Nicandrum frustra secuti Macer atque Vergilius?*

παῖδας ἀριστονόους ('sons of supreme wisdom') of the city of Colophon.[470] As a poet, but even more as a man of learning, Nicander is praised by Athenaeus: "Haven't you always had admiration for Nicander of Colophon, the epic poet, how he is so fond of antique words, and so learned?".[471]

### 9.2 *Epic Poets*

As an established author in the genre of learned didactic poetry Nicander seems to have been influential to both Greek and Latin poets. This goes most obviously for one of the two Oppians, viz. the author of the *Halieutica*. As a didactic poem in the Hellenistic vein it resembles Nicander's approach, his compulsive urge to offer extensive accounts and listings, its vocabulary, including some of its rarities, and, admittedly, its repetitiveness.[472] Another epic poet that reminds us of Nicander's style is Dionysius 'Periegetes' of Alexandria, whose geographic-didactic poem Οἰκουμένης περιήγησις not only seems to echo certain turns of phrase or pieces of information, but also contains an acrostic, which may well be due to Nicander's influence.[473] In Latin Nicander's *Theriaca* appears to have influenced Aemilius Macer (first century BCE), a friend and contemporary of Vergil. Presumably inspired by Nicander, Macer wrote a *Theriaca* of his own, but of the two books very little remains.[474] From the testimonia we can gather that it told us 'which serpents were harmful, and which herbs helpful'.[475] The fragments themselves show indebtedness to the *Alexipharmaca* as well.[476] In general the scanty remains show that Macer's *Theriaca* was written in the same vein as Nicander's. Vergil too shows signs of indebtedness to Nicander in the *Georgics*, as appears from occasional ver-

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470 *AP* 9.213, Καὶ Κολοφὼν ἀρίδηλος ἐνὶ πτολίεσσι τέτυκται | δοιοὺς θρεψαμένη παῖδας ἀριστονόους, | πρωτότοκον μὲν Ὅμηρον, ἀτὰρ Νίκανδρον ἔπειτα, | ἀμφοτέρους Μούσαις οὐρανίῃσι φίλους; date unknown.

471 Ath. 3.100.14, οὐ σὺ μέντοι τὸν Κολοφώνιον Νίκανδρον ἀεὶ τεθαύμακας τὸν ἐποποιὸν ὡς φιλάρχαιον καὶ πολυμαθῆ; the reference is primarily to the *Georgica*, but may concern Nicander's writings in general.

472 See James 1970. More recently, however, the apparent virtues of Oppian have been brought to the fore by Rebuffat (2001), Bartley (2003), and Kneebone (2008).

473 See Jacques 2002, cxx.

474 Fragments in Hollis 2007, 93–117.

475 Ov. *Tr.* 4.10.43–44, *saepe suas volucres legit mihi grandior aevo | quaeque nocet serpens, quae iuvat herba, Macer*. The first hexameter points at Macer's *Ornithogonia* (which was inspired by the Greek *Ornithogonia* of Boeus; see Forbes Irving 1990, 33–37), the second at the *Theriaca*.

476 Aemilius Macer fr. 64 Hollis.

bal imitations.[477] Another instance of Latin didactic epic bearing the marks of the *Theriaca*, albeit slightly, is Germanicus' translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena*, commonly referred to as the *Aratea*: line 648 shows a piece of information not found in Aratus, but based on Nicander's alternative treatment of the story in *Ther*. 16.[478]

In the field of narrative epic (as opposed to didactic) the most important poet to have used Nicander's catalogue of serpents is Lucan. Famous or infamous, the ninth book of the *Pharsalia*, dealing with the sensational journey of Cato the Younger through the Libyan desert, is primarily known for its frightening catalogue of snakes (9.700–733), and the havoc they wreak upon the army (9.734–871). Although it is clear that Lucan used other sources as well, in particular Macer, Nicander's influence is hard to deny.[479] Similarly Nicandrean borrowings have been detected in Statius and Claudianus.[480] In the realm of late Greek epic, imitations, or at least verbal echoes of the *Theriaca*, have been suggested in Quintus' *Posthomerica*, and Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*.[481]

Nicander's influence is evident in Lucian's display piece *Dipsades*, a description of the unfriendly Libyan desert. Among the horrifying creatures dwelling there we find the *dipsas* ('thirst-snake'), whose detailed description matches Nicander's account. Not only does Lucian manage to convey the Nicandrean spirit of the snake-desert as an unfriendly and dangerous place, but for those who missed the Nicandrean origin of the image, Lucian assures us that "it

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477 See Cazzaniga 1960; Thomas 1988b, 119–123, 137. For Nicander's influence on pseudo-Vergil's *Culex* see Salemme 2004.

478 See Possanza 2004, 58–59.

479 See Wick 2004, 277 ff. The relation between Nicander, Macer and Lucan has been addressed by many. A good overview is given by Lausberg 1990, 174 n. 4. The few extant lines of Macer's *Theriaca* (transmitted by Origenes in relation to Lucan) show a piece of information not in Nicander, which suggests that Macer made his own choices in translating the *Theriaca*. Courtney (1993, 296), however, may be right in suggesting that Macer merely misinterpreted a particular word of Nicander.

480 See Cazzaniga 1959, 125–129.

481 For Quintus Smyrnaeus see West 1963, for Nonnus see Livrea 1971 and Vian 1976–2006. Whether the lost Ἀληξίκηπος of Nestor of Laranda (second-third century CE), a poet whose approach seems to have been quite similar to that of Nicander, was indebted to the *Theriaca* is unclear; the *Alexipharmaca* at least was an evident source of inspiration. Other known titles (Μεταμορφώσεις, Πανάκεια) are close enough to Nicander, and his Ἰλιὰς λ(ε)ιπογράμματος shows an interest in playing with the Homeric-epic tradition; see Latacz 2000.

is certainly not to rival Nicander the poet that I have gone through these details".[482]

A much later poet who concerned himself with the *Theriaca*, but of whom nothing survives, is the Roman-Byzantine Marianus (fifth-sixth century CE), who, according to the Suda, produced paraphrases of canonical (at least according to him) Hellenistic poets in iambics. Apart from Aratus' *Phaenomena*, Apollonius' *Argonautica*, hymns, epigrams and the *Hecale* and *Aetia* of Callimachus, and some of the works of Theocritus, an iambic paraphrase was composed of Nicander's *Theriaca*.[483]

### 9.3 *Grammarians*

According to the Suda Pamphilus, a late Alexandrian grammarian and lexicographer (first century CE), wrote τὰ Νικάνδρου ἀνεξήγητα ('unexplained matters of Nicander'), which may well have consisted of textual problems, considering the description in the Suda-lemma.[484] The *Theriaca* was studied and commented upon by several other eminent philologists in antiquity, such as Theon, Plutarch and Demetrius Chlorus.[485] They, and others, were mainly concerned with its lexical oddities, as appears from the fragments concerning Nicander in the grammarian Philoxenus,[486] and in the lexicon (*Vocum Hippocraticarum collectio*) of the grammarian and doctor Erotianus.[487] The same goes for

482 Luc. *Dips*. 9, Ταυτὶ οὐ μὰ Δία πρὸς Νίκανδρον τὸν ποιητὴν φιλοτιμούμενος διεξῆλθον […].

483 Suda s.v. Μαριανός (μ 194); cf. Schneider 1856, 202. Agosti (2001, 224) is certain "that Marianus was moved by the need for readability and clarity".

484 Pamphilus s.v. Suda π 142. Both γραμματικὸς Ἀριστάρχειος ('grammarian in the vein or tradition of Aristarchus') and Περὶ γλωσσῶν ἤτοι λέξεων βιβλία point at textual rather than epexegetic work on Nicander.

485 For Theon (who is mentioned in Σ *Ther*. 237a) on Nicander see Guhl 1969 *passim*. Next to Theon Plutarch's involvement with the *Theriaca* (fr. 113–115 Sandbach) can be gathered from the lemma on Κορόπη in the *Ethnica* of Stephanus of Byzantium (375.8): Νίκανδρος ἐν Θηριακοῖς "ἧ ἐν Ἀπόλλων | μαντείας Κοροπαῖος ἐθήκατο καὶ θέμιν ἀνδρῶν" (*Ther*. 613–614). οἱ δὲ ὑπομνηματίσαντες αὐτὸν Θέων καὶ Πλούταρχος καὶ Δημήτριος ὁ Φαληρεύς (*sic*) φασι […]. The confusion caused by Δημήτριος ὁ Φαληρεύς, who stood at the very beginning of the period of Alexandrian poetry in the third century BCE, and could obviously not have written anything on the Nicander of the *Theriaca*, is due to another Demetrius, viz. Chlorus, a grammarian probably from the first century BCE, who is mentioned in Σ *Ther*. 158b; 377–378a; 382a; 541a; 585a; 622c; 748, 781b.

486 Philoxenus fr. 346.2, 482.12.

487 See Philox. Gramm. 346.2, 482.12; Erot. 57.8, 89.14, 111.5, 127.13, 136.9, 137.7.

references to the *Theriaca* in Herodianus.[488] From the Byzantine era we know that Johannes Tzetzes read and produced scholia on the *Theriaca*.[489]

### 9.4 *Authors Dealing with Medicine and Biology*

In this field Nicander's fame appears to have made the most enduring impact.[490] Considering the highly limited applicability of Nicander's medical knowledge this is striking, yet it tells us that despite these limitations Nicander, perhaps by lack of competition, had become a canonical author in the field of learning, and despite the fact that this was not the way the *Theriaca* was intended originally. Rather than being read for literary pleasure didactic poetry seems to have become a means of preserving out-of-the-way expertise.

In the first century CE, Dioscorides Pedanius, an Alexandrian doctor, advisor to Ptolemy Auletes and Ptolemy XIII, and prolific author of works on medicine (*De materia medica* in 24 books), refers twice to Nicander's *Theriaca*.[491] Doubtlessly inspired by Nicander he, or rather someone else whose work is transmitted under his name, wrote a *Theriaca* (Περὶ ἰοβόλων, ἐν ᾧ καὶ περὶ λυσσόντος κυνός, 'On poison-injecting animals, including rabiate dogs') and an *Alexipharmaca* (Περὶ δηλητηρίων φαρμάκων καὶ τῆς αὐτῶν προφυλακῆς καὶ θεραπείας, 'On destructive herbs and protection and treatment from them'). Although Nicander is only once mentioned by name, his influence on topic and material is evident.[492]

The second century CE doctor and Greek author Galen, concerned with all kinds of medical treatises, refers to Nicander in eight different passages, five of which are in relation to the *Theriaca*.[493] His qualification καλός Νίκανδρος seems to point primarily at his appreciation for Nicander as a poet, rather than an expert.[494] Some of the quotations are found in Galen's *De theriaca ad Pisonem*, which appears to be an improved version of one of Nicander's main recipes. Following Galen, the treatise on poisoning by Philumenus (second or third century CE), Περὶ ἰοβόλων ζῴων καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς βοηθημάτων ('On

488 Hdn. *De prosodia catholica* 3.1.190.5, 201.13, 204.32, 395.11, 529.28; 3.2.60.33, 188.8, 188.11, 468.12, 718.17, 734.5, 874.37, 922.2, 940.32; Περὶ πάθων 186.19.

489 *Chiliades* 1.11.269–307 deals with Nicander's treatment of the story of Hyacinthus (*Ther.* 902–906); Tzetzes appears in the scholia as well; see Σ *Ther.* 94d and 795a.

490 See Touwaide 1991, 73–77.

491 Dsc. 3.29.1 and 4.99.1; see Nutton 1997, 671.

492 See Dsc. *Ther.* 17.

493 For a textual analysis of Galen's knowledge of Nicander see Jacques 2003.

494 Gal. 14.239 Kühn, ἅπερ ἡμῖν ὁ καλὸς Νίκανδρος ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσιν αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀφυῶς γράφει, καὶ ἔστι τὰ ἔπη ταῦτα. Cf. Knoefel & Covi 1991, 35–37.

poisonous animals and medicines extracted from them'), a compilation of contemporary knowledge, may be using the *Theriaca* as one of its sources, although nothing certain can be stated here.[495]

Most of the references to Nicander in Latin literature are made by Pliny the Elder.[496] But although Nicander's name appears 28 times in the *Naturalis Historia*, not all of them deal with the *Theriaca*. Moreover, Nicander's name often appears sided by Macer's, so that we get the impression Pliny sometimes used Macer's Latin text to tell us what Nicander said, without actually resorting to the original.[497] The frequent appearance of his name, however, does point at Nicander's status as an authority. This authoritative image is also felt in a brief remark by Apuleius, who calls to mind Nicander and Theophrastus as experts on poisoning in his *Apologia pro se de magia* (41.6). To Claudius Aelian (second century CE), more concerned with interesting facts about wildlife than with exact observations of animals, Nicander was a relevant source. One of Aelian's remarks points out Nicander as one of his sources, and some of his remarks clearly stem from the *Theriaca*. Moreover, although Nicander's name is lacking, seventeen more statements in *De natura animalium* are clearly taken directly from the *Theriaca*.[498] A similar anonymous use of the *Theriaca* as a source of knowledge is found in Gregory of Nazianzus, who seems to have found his information on the cruel birth of baby vipers (who 'hatch' by eating through their mother's body from inside) in *Ther.* 132–134.[499]

An interesting addition in this section is found in Tertullian, who read the *Theriaca* as a source of information on scorpions. Of course his interest

495 On Philumenus see Touwaide 2000.

496 Another author of whom indebtedness to Nicander's *Theriaca* has been suggested is the Roman author Scribonius Largus (first century CE), whose *Compositiones*, discussing 271 medical prescriptions, also deals with animal poisoning and preventative preparation; see Touwaide 2001. However, neither Nicander's name nor the *Theriaca* are mentioned; see Knoefel & Covi 1991, 27. Any influence of Nicander on Quintus Serenus Sammonicus (third-fourth century CE), the author of a *Liber Medicinalis*, seems to have gone primarily through Pliny; Knoefel & Covi 1991, 35. The direct impact of Nicander on Celsus and Oribasius seems equally difficult to assert; see Knoefel & Covi 1991, 25–27 and 37–38.

497 See Hollis 2007, 102.

498 Cf. Ael. *NA* 9.20.10, 10.9.9, 15.18.3; *NA* 8.8.2 is based on the *Theriaca*, but seems to use another source in addition. Unnamed statements based on Nicander are found in *NA* 1.50, 2.6, 2.22, 3.22, 3.36, 6.34, 6.38, 6.51, 9.4, 9.16, 9.23, 9.26, 9.66, 10.25, 11.26, 15.13; see Knoefel & Covi 1991, 38–39.

499 Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 2.2.5, 112–113; see Moroni 2006, 231–232. Other borrowings include information on the Thracian stone (*Ther.* 45–50) in 1.2.2, 585 (= 624), the bite of the cobra (*Ther.* 187–189) in 1.2.2, 291 (= 601), and the *dipsas* (*Ther.* 334–342) in 1.2.28, 151–157 (= 867).

concerns the metaphorical use of antidotes against scorpions, in order to state a defense against gnostic heresies. In the first chapter of his *Adversus gnosticos scorpiace* (121a) he starts by stating the variety of species among scorpions, both in shape and colour, something he learned from Nicander who *scribit et pingit*.[500] This is ostensibly a testimony to the fact the Nicander was thought to have illuminated his own writings.[501] One cannot rule out, however, the suggestion that Tertullian was thinking of Nicander's ability to compose highly graphical descriptions.[502]

Although serious doubts can be raised about the applicability of the contents of the *Theriaca*, they were nevertheless considered at some point valuable enough for their own sake, ostensibly without much consideration for the literary merits of the poem. The best proof of this seems to be the prose paraphrase of the poem attributed to the rhetor Eutecnius, who lived somewhere between the third and fifth centuries CE.[503] The result of Eutecnius' efforts is a subservient treatise of similar length that closely follows both the contents and the structure of Nicander's *Theriaca*, but lacks all the affected lexical indulgences of the original.[504] Interestingly all mythological and aetiological references, despite being equally superfluous as to the technical contents of the material, are kept intact. Eutecnius thus merely tried to open up the text by removing its extravagant lexicon and imperative metre.[505] Moreover, he was not the only one to produce a paraphrase of the *Theriaca*, as we know of another author who either paraphrased or wrote about it. Athenaeus quotes a certain Diphilus of Laodicea, who wrote a work called Περὶ τῶν Νικάνδρου Θηριακῶν, in which improvements on Nicander seem to have been presented.[506]

500 Tert. *Scorp*. 121a, *Magnum de modico malum scorpios terra suppurat: tot venena, quot genera; tot pernicies, quot et species; tot dolores, quot et colores, Nicander scribit et pingit: et tamen unus omnium violentiae gestus nocere de cauda; quae cauda erit, quodcumque de postumo corporis propagatur, et verberat.*

501 The issue of Nicander drawing complementary pictures to his writings is discussed by Lazaris 2005.

502 Sistakou 2012, 203.

503 Fornaro 1998, 315.

504 Eutecnius produced a similar paraphrase of the *Alexipharmaca*; see Geymonat 1976.

505 We should, however, bear in mind that Eutecnius is called a sophist in the transmitted title of his paraphrase, ΠΑΡΑΦΡΑΣΙΣ ΕΥΤΕΚΝΙΟΥ ΣΟΦΙΣΤΟΥ ΕΚ ΤΩΝ ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΘΗΡΙΑΚΩΝ; see Gualandri 1968 and Papathomopoulos 1976. We should therefore not overlook the possibility that Eutecnius considered his work a rhetorical excercise, rather than a genuine attempt to make make Nicander's material more accessible.

506 Ath. 7.314d.

The next reference to Nicander's work on snakebites appears to be found in the Christian author Epiphanius (fourth century CE). In his *Panarion* we find Nicander mentioned in a list of authors dealing with medication and treatment of wounds.[507] Nicander's fame as a source of information on snakebites did not wane after the late antique period. In the sixth century CE we see the indirect influence of Nicander on the Byzantine physician and writer Aëtius of Amida, whose *Tetrabibloi* (originally in 16 books) dealt, at least for a small part, with Philumenus' interpretation of Nicander's *Theriaca*.[508] The Byzantine compiler Paulus of Aegina (seventh century CE) compiled his *De re medica libri septem* using Nicander as one of his sources, whom he mentions by name in his discussion of the bite of the asp, pointing at *Ther*. 188.[509] If we are to go by some of the epigrams in the *Greek Anthology* Nicander appears to have taken pride of place among writers dealing with medicine. In *AP* 9.211 we learn that Nicander was ranked highest immediately after Apollo, Cheiron, Aclepius, and Hippocrates.[510] In *AP* 9.212 he is considered to have received his knowledge from Paieon, the god of healing, himself.[511] His status as one of the authoritative writers on medicine is also reflected in the only picture of Nicander known to us. The sixth century Viennese manuscript of Dioscorides' *De materia medica*, famous for its many drawings, has a picture of Nicander holding a snake, or perhaps talking to it, in a circle of experts, consisting, apart from Nicander and Dioscorides, of Galen, Crateuas, Andreas, Rufus, and Apollonius Mys.[512]

## 9.5 *Nicandrean Scholarship in the Early Modern Period*

The publication of the *editio princeps* of the *Theriaca* in 1499 by the Venetian Aldine press, together with the work of Dioscorides, occasioned new scholarship in the centuries to follow. In the field of grammar Johann Lonitzer made

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507 Epiph. Const. 1.171, Καὶ Νίκανδρος μὲν ὁ συγγραφεὺς θηρῶν τε καὶ ἑρπετῶν ἐποιήσατο τῶν φύσεων τὴν γνῶσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ συγγραφεῖς ῥιζῶν τε καὶ βοτανῶν τὰς ὕλας, ὡς Διοσκουρίδης μὲν ὁ ὑλοτόμος, Πάμφιλός τε καὶ Μιθριδάτης ὁ βασιλεύς, Καλλισθένης τε καὶ Φίλων, Ἰόλαός τε ὁ Βιθυνὸς καὶ Ἡρακλείδας ὁ Ταραντῖνος, Κρατεύας ὁ ῥιζοτόμος, Ἀνδρέας τε καὶ Βάσσος ὁ Τύλιος, Νικήρατος καὶ Πετρώνιος, Νίγερ καὶ Διόδοτος, καὶ ἄλλοι τινές; see Knoefel & Covi 1991, 40.

508 Knoefel & Covi 1991, 68–69.

509 Paul. Aeg. 5.19.3. See Knoefel & Covi 1991, 39.

510 *AP* 9.211, Παιήων, Χείρων, Ἀσκληπιός, Ἱπποκράτης τε· | τοῖς δ' ἔπι Νίκανδρος προφερέστερον ἔλλαχεν εὖχος.

511 *AP* 9.212, Φάρμακα πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ μεμιγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ | Νίκανδρος κατέλεξεν, ἐπιστάμενος περὶ πάντων | ἀνθρώπων. ἦ γὰρ Παιηονός ἐστι γενέθλης.

512 See Gow & Scholfield 1953, 8. For the status of Nicander as a quintessential source of knowledge in later times, e.g. for the famous Dutch physician Herman Boerhaave (1668–1738), see Knoefel & Covi 1991, 69.

important contributions. But it was particularly in the field of medicine that Nicander's text was scrutinized, by scholars such as Jean de Gorris, Pedro Jaime Esteve, and Jacques Grévin.[513]

Iohannes Lonericus (Johann Lonitzer, 1499–1569) was a German philologist, translator, theologian and Augustinian. Apart from his religious work as a classical scholar he published 21 declamations of Isocrates, a first translation in Latin of Pindar's *Odes*, as well as a declamation by Demosthenes, and several grammatical and rhetorical treatises. As to the medical texts from Antiquity, editions were produced of Dioscorides, two treatises of Galen, and both of Nicander's poems (1531). His Latin translation of Nicander was an important trigger for the dissemination of interest in Nicander in the Renaissance. In 1532, a year after Lonitzer's prose translation, Einrich Ritze Solde produced his Latin translation in verse. Initially Lonitzer had considered such a project as well, but thought that the medical contents were better served by an accurate and servicable translation than a forced poetic one.

The Parisian medical scholar Iohannes Gorraeus (Jean de Gorris, 1505–1577), wel versed in both Greek and Latin, produced a translation with commentary on both the *Alexipharmaca* (1549) and the *Theriaca* (1557), as well as several other commented editions of works of Hippocrates and Galen. He is noted for his broad philological knowledge of Nicander's text, which extended to literature, mythology, linguistics, textual criticism, paleography, as well as the medical field, botany, and toxicology.

Pedro Jaime Esteve (1500–1558), a scholar working on anatomy, surgery, mathematics, and Greek, was responsible for an edition, with Spanish translation, of the *Theriaca*. His background in the study of medical botany gave the commentary in his edition a particular focus on Nicander's botanical *realia*.

The scholar Iacobus Grevinus (Jacques Grévin, 1538–1570) was versed in both poetry and medicine. In 1567 he published a text in two volumes with a verse translation in French of Nicander's works, printed by Plantin, and reprinted in 1568. In the eighteenth century Angelo Maria Bandini republished the commentary and Latin translation of Gorraeus, together with an Italian translation by Anton Maria Salvini.

A last note on Nicander's synoptic reception given here concerns his repeated occurrence in French Renaissance literature. Rabelais mentions him four times in his *Pantagruel*, next to De Ronsard and Belleau.[514] Moreover, Milton's brief enumeration of snakes in *Paradise Lost* 10.514 is strongly reminiscent

513 The information contained in this section was taken from Radici 2012, 35–47.

514 Touwaide 1991, 66; Knoefel & Covi 1991, 61–62.

of the *Theriaca* (scorpion, asp, amphisbaena, cerastes, hydrus, ellops, dipsas etc.), although it may be based on other sources, such as Lucan.[515]

## 9.6 *Conclusion*

The picture emerging from Nicander's reception is not unproblematic. Whereas Cicero and Quintilian evidently considered Nicander a man of letters, just like Latin poets who used Nicander's poetical work or were inspired by his original approach, the fact remains that a large part of the afterlife of the *Theriaca* is dominated by technical literature dealing with medicine. Significant is also the praise given to Nicander as an expert among other doctors—even mythical ones—in some epigrams of the Greek Anthology. We cannot but conclude that Nicander, despite our misgivings concerning the information presented in the *Theriaca*, was considered a source to be valued in matters of the treatment of snakebites.[516]

There are, however, some arguments to be made against this view. From the composition of the *Theriaca* onwards Nicander's name became associated with the poem's subject matter, even though it may well be true that perhaps few later authors actually consulted the original. This may be the case for those who wrote in Latin, as they are more likely to have used citations found in Pliny or used the adaptation of Aemilius Macer than to have dealt with Nicander's difficult and learned Hellenistic Greek. But even among later Greek authors dealing with medicine many seem to have been compilers rather than specialists. In this case too Nicander may well have become a name associated with a particular strand of literature, rather than a source read in the original. One did not need to actually know the poem itself to show one was learned and well versed in both the traditions of poetry and medicine.

It is this tradition of cultured men, exemplified by someone like Aelian or the guests present at Athenaeus' dinner table that may well have been the reason for the survival of Nicander's poem. As a treatise of technical expertise the *Theriaca* was no doubt replaced by something more useful and more applicable, but as a 'classical' work of curious Hellenistic learning, full of linguistic details preserving older traditions, the *Theriaca* never lost its appeal. Even if the subject of the *Theriaca* was of some interest from a medical perspective to someone

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515 Knoefel-Covi 1991, 61. Other instances of Nicander's influence on later literature are difficult to assess, as they usually contain too little to go by. For the case of Keats see Knoefel & Covi, 63.

516 Cf. Scarborough (1984, 27), who recognises the intriguing fact that it was the obscure poetry of Nicander that became the standard source of toxicology, instead of the lucid treatise of Nicander's source Apollodorus.

like Galen, the attraction of the poem may well have lain in its use of learned diction or mythology.[517] In this light it is interesting that Eutecnius, whose prose paraphrase of the *Theriaca* we still have, is called a sophist in the title of this work. Unless this qualification is a later addition it shows that Eutecnius' interests are aimed at antiquarianism rather than medical technicalities.

With regard to the later tradition of Nicander's work, it is obvious that Nicander was primarily, though not exclusively, studied for his medical contents, which were considered valuable both from a toxicological and a botanical viewpoint.

## 10 Conclusion

This introduction has served a twofold purpose: (i) to give a broad overview of the major literary elements that will be treated in detail in the commentary; (ii) to support the thesis, as stated in chapter 1, that Nicander's *Theriaca* deserves to be read as a work of art. To this purpose evidence has been collected pointing out many minute details that corroborate my view that the *Theriaca* is first and foremost intended as a literary showpiece. Whether modern or literary tastes can appreciate an extravagant poem as the *Theriaca* as a succesful attempt to boldly venture on territories unknown is ultimately a matter of personal preference. The *Theriaca* is not likely to be a poem palatable to everyone's taste, and setting benchmarks for the 'literary level' of the poem is too exact an approach.

What I do hope to have shown is that Nicander's occupation with the intertwining of literary elements is not something to be brushed aside lightly, a thin layer of epic veneer on top of a versified medical treatise. As we have seen Nicander's diction is highly learned, and sparkles with references of various kinds to literature of the far and recent past. No-one can deny that these attempts to continually enhance the aesthetic merits of the poem by playing with the Alexandrian tradition and the didactic tradition of Hesiod are fundamental to the poem, not superficial.

Yet one also cannot deny the problematic status of Nicander as an expert, a doctor perhaps, who made an impact on learned medical literature after him. Unpractical, unconvincing, or even preposterous as Nicander's instructions

517 For Galen's interest in literature, style and the relation between medicine and poetry see De Lacy 1966 and Sluiter 1995. Apart from Galen's primary motivation, viz. praising Hippocrates by pointing out his superiority, his portrayal of knowledge of literature occasionally gives the impression of cultural self-advertisement.

may occasionally seem, we cannot just serve them off as light-hearted parody: the *Theriaca* is simply too serious a poem for that. Moreover, detailed studies, as those by Jacques, show Nicander's reliance on more than just one author. Nicander appears to have studied several prose sources, including Numenius, Diocles, Erasistratus, and Philinus.[518] Others have pointed at similarities between the Hippocratic corpus and some of the more technical terms used in the *Theriaca*. This does not, however, necessarily imply that Nicander was himself an expert or a doctor.

It is better to refrain from judgements about the validity of Nicander as an expert on toxicology. Separating superstition from exact science, improbable ingredients from genuine serums, and proven facts from casual observation is very difficult and severely marred by the two millennia that separate Nicander from us. Rather than splitting hairs with regard to Nicander's validity as a biological-medical pundit I have concentrated on his validity as an artist. This does not mean that the profound research dutifully carried out by Jacques is invalid. Nor does it mean that a literary approach to the *Theriaca* is the only right one. It does mean, however, that there is more to be gained in terms of appreciating the artistic achievement of Nicander when one looks beyond the technicalities of the *realia*, or the sources Nicander must have used.

I hope to have shown in this introduction the artistic pleasure, the craftmanship, and the off-beat predilections of Nicander, who will always remain the odd one out in our handbooks of literary history. The *Theriaca* may have its shortcomings, but one can approach the poem as a work of art without instantly condemning it as a failed attempt at versifying a prose treatise. If such a—richer—reading is stimulated by this introduction and the complementary commentary, it will provide an alternative interpretation of the poem that is valuable in its own right.

## 11 Text

Our knowledge of Hellenistic poetry is severely marred by the less than fortunate transmission of its texts on papyri and, ultimately, in the manuscript tradition. This is certainly the case for most of Callimachus' output, (proto-) Hellenistic poets as Philitas, Antimachus, Hermesianax, Euphorion, Alexander Aetolus, and many others chiefly known to us from their, often meagre, fragments, as collected in Powell's *Collectanea Alexandrina* or Parsons & Lloyd

518 See Jacques 2002, xx–xlix.

Jones' *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, and, more recently, *Supplementum Supplementi Hellenistici*.[519] To Nicander's poetry fate has been somewhat kinder, although still many of his writings are lost to us. Apart from the two extant toxicological works the only poem of which substantial parts remain is the *Georgica*, which consisted of at least two books.[520] Some 150 lines are preserved in several fragments, the longest counting 72 lines, chiefly from quotations by Athenaeus, in addition to two brief quotations preserved in the scholia on Nicander. By contrast, the *Theriaca* itself has fared well, as 28 manuscripts have been transmitted (not all of them complete) in two classes, in addition to three insubstantial papyrus fragments.[521]

As Gow points out: "It is needless to trace editions of Nicander beyond the year 1856."[522] In that year Otto Schneider presented a new text, superseding those of J.G. Schneider, whose *Theriaca* appeared in 1816, and F.S. Lehrs, who presented a text of the *Theriaca* in 1843.[523] This remained the authoritive text until A.S.F. Gow and A.F. Scholfield presented their edition in 1953. Their modest wish to open up Nicandrean scholarship by providing a handy edition with translation (ninety-seven years after Schneider's edition) resulted in a text that stayed relatively close to that of Otto Schneider, relying on his apparatus criticus.[524] The edition of Gow-Scholfield remained the standard text for decades, although (mostly minor) contributions were made by others to the study of the text of the *Theriaca*.[525] In the 1950s and 1960s Ignazio Cazzaniga devoted many

519 Powell 1925, Lloyd-Jones & Parsons 1983, Lloyd-Jones 2005.

520 Ath. 9.395c, Νίκανδρος ἐν δευτέρῳ Γεοργικῶν … φησί; fr. 73 G-S.

521 An extensive overview of the manuscripts of the *Theriaca* is given by Jacques 2002, cxxxv–lx; cf. Gow & Scholfield 1953, 9–15. There is an Oxyrhynchus papyrus (*P.Oxy.* 2221, see *SH* 563) from the first century CE, containing a small part of an antique commentary on the *Theriaca*, which explains *Ther.* 384–388 in more common Greek. A second papyrus (*P.Oxy.* 3851, second century CE) is mentioned, though not printed, in Gow & Scholfield 1953, 14; it contains some bits from *Ther.* 333–344. A third papyrus (*P.Mil.Vogl.* 2.45 = *SH* 563A, first century CE) contains some commentary on *Ther.* 526, apparently discussing the meaning of the rare Nicandrean noun κύμβος. What we can gather from these scanty remains is that commentaries on the *Theriaca* were in use two or three centuries after its initial publication, dealing with the poet's difficult language.

522 Gow & Scholfield 1953, 9.

523 Lehrs' edition appeared in 1843 in the *Poetae Bucolici et Didactici* volume, reprinted in 1862.

524 Gow and Scholfield only edited the poems and poetical fragments (retaining the numbering of the fragments of Otto Schneider); for the grammatical fragments and prose *testimonia* Schneider's 1856 edition remains the most recent one.

525 E.g. Colonna 1952, Beazley 1954, West 1963, Galán Vioque 2006.

articles to improved readings of the *Theriaca*,[526] but was not able to finish a new edition before his death.[527] From the 1980s onwards Heather White has made some textual suggestions.[528] In 1998 Alain Touwaide presented an article containing many textual proposals.[529] In 2002 Jean-Marie Jacques finally presented a completely new text in the Budé series, followed in 2007 by Giuseppe Spatafora's edition, which is based on Jacques', but differs in 31 *loci*.

The key problem in a proper edition of the *Theriaca* lies in the disputed merits of manuscript Π, the so-called Parisinus (inconveniently indicated in Jacques' 2002 edition as T),[530] which is markedly different from the other manuscripts.[531] The unique Parisinus manuscript, already valued by Bussemaker (who published his edition of the scholia on the *Theriaca* in 1849), Otto Schneider, and even more by Gow-Scholfield, both for its quality and its seniority, is still favoured by Jacques.[532] According to Touwaide, however, following observations by Cazzaniga and White, it should not be valued more than the consensus of the other manuscripts (known under the heading Ω, based on a last hyparchetype), for although Π is older, it appears to be a late antique revision that is learned, but also less reliable.[533] It should be said that, despite painstaking efforts to present the best text of the *Theriaca*, an undisputed text remains out of reach, because of the relative merit given to manuscripts. More than once textual variants induce the editor to exchange one *hapax legomenon* for

526 Cazzaniga 1957a, 1957b, 1958, 1963a, 1963b, 1964, 1966a, 1966b, 1973.

527 Spanoudakis 2005, 403; De Stefani 2006b, 104.

528 White 1987; 2002.

529 Touwaide's publication of his textual work followed in the wake of the appearance in 1997 of a luxurious facsimile of the Parisinus manuscript of the *Theriaca*, famous for its high-quality drawings (*Parisinus Bibliothecae Nationalis Supplementum graecum* 247; cf. Touwaide 1998, 151). The edition was accompanied by an introduction, notes, and a translation by Touwaide, subsequently translated in Spanish for the edition.

530 See Jacques 2002, cxxxviii.

531 For a brief history of Π (Parisinus Suppl. 247), an incomplete (altogether 402 of the *Theriaca*'s 958 lines are missing) manuscript from the tenth or eleventh century, see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 9–10; Touwaide 1997, 154–155; Jacques 2002, cxxxvii–xlvi.

532 See Gow & Scholfield 1953, 9; Jacques 2002, cxxxvi–cxxxvii.

533 Touwaide 1998, 151; see White 1987, 16, 56 etc. for instances of defensible readings by Ω. Touwaide (1998, 156–157) makes a point of stressing that Gow & Scholfield strongly rely on the weight put on Π by Otto Schneider, without having consulted the manuscript itself. Their indebtedness thus resulted in the copying of several incorrect (according to Touwaide) readings of manuscript Π from Schneider's apparatus criticus. Jacques (2002, cxxxxix n. 324), however, holds strong views on the invalidity of Touwaide's claims and ultimately shows a much more sound textual criticism overall.

another, and even the most sensible text entails difficulties. Moreover, in order to make the text understandable one sometimes needs to simplify it, which carries the risk of neglecting the poetic aim of Nicander's deviant lexicon and syntax.

For this commentary I have relied principally on the text of Jacques, it being the most recent and sensible one. Although I do not agree with Jacques' text throughout, his choices are generally sound and well substantiated. Instances where I prefer an alternative are usually those where Jacques has given intertextual allusions too little credit. Punctuation and the use of capitals may vary from Jacques'. In the following places my choices diverge from Jacques' text, either in order to follow Gow or Spatafora, the reasons for which can be found in the commentary:

| **Line** | **Jacques** | **Overduin** |
|---|---|---|
| 21 | σταθμοῦ τε | σταθμοῖο |
| 31 | ἀζαλέον | ἀζαλέων |
| 116 | ἀνδράσ' | ἄνδρας |
| 130 | θαλερῷ | θολερῷ |
| 150 | λιθάδας | λίθακάς |
| 151 | οὐ μὲν | οὔ κεν |
| 156 | †ἀλινδόμενοι† | ἀλινδόμενοι |
| 172 | ψαφαρή | ψαφαρὸς |
| 175 | πολύστονος | πολύστομος |
| 205 | αὐήνῃ | ἀζήνῃ |
| 230 | Κώκυτον | Κωκυτὸν |
| 282 | ἐνίσπω | ἐνίψω |
| 309 | Τροίηθέ γ' | Τροίηθεν |
| 476 | πάντοθε | πάντοθι |
| 483 | ἐπαχθέα | ἀπεχθέα |
| | βρύχματ' | βρύγματ' |
| 509–540 | placed after 556 | no transposition |
| 593 | †πληγῇσι† | πληγῇσι |
| 605 | ἄπο συληθέντα | ἀποσυληθέντα |
| 613 | ἐν αἰζηοῖσι | ἐνὶ ζωοῖσι |
| 662 | μολυβρή | μολοβρή |
| 691 | καρχαλέης | καρχαλέου |
| 698 | ἄλλων | ἄλκαρ |
| 708 | λαεργέϊ | εὐεργέϊ |

| **Line** | **Jacques** | **Overduin** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 724 | †κατήριπεν† | κατήριπεν |
| 728 | βάρος | κάρος |
| 730 | ἔπι καὶ | καὶ ἐπὶ |
| 762 | ἔγχλοα | ἔγχνοα |
| 781 | καρήνου | κεραίης |
| 802 | ταί | τοί |
| 803 | ἱπτάμεναι | ἱπτάμενοι |
| 818 | ἐπαχθές | ἀπεχθές |
| 820 | ἄκμητος | ἄκμηνος |
| 862 | νήστειρα | δρήστειρα |
| 879 | πρασιῇς | πρασιῇς |
| | χλοάον | χλοερὸν |
| 892 | lacuna after 891 | no lacuna |
| 896 | μειλίχματα | μειλίγματα |

# Νικάνδρου Θηριακά

Ῥεῖά κέ τοι μορφάς τε σίνη τ᾽ ὀλοφώϊα θηρῶν
ἀπροϊδῆ τύψαντα λύσιν θ᾽ ἑτεραλκέα κήδευς,
φίλ᾽ Ἑρμησιάναξ, πολέων κυδίστατε παῶν,
ἔμπεδα φωνήσαιμι· σὲ δ᾽ ἂν πολύεργος ἀροτρεύς
βουκαῖός τ᾽ ἀλέγοι καὶ ὀροιτύπος, εὖτε καθ᾽ ὕλην
ἢ καὶ ἀροτρεύοντι βάλῃ ἔπι λοιγὸν ὀδόντα,
τοῖα περιφρασθέντος ἀλεξητήρια νούσων.

Ἀλλ᾽ ἤτοι κακοεργὰ φαλάγγια, σὺν καὶ ἀνιγρούς
ἑρπηστὰς ἔχιάς τε καὶ ἄχθεα μυρία γαίης
Τιτήνων ἐνέπουσιν ἀφ᾽ αἵματος, εἰ ἐτεόν περ
Ἀσκραῖος μυχάτοιο Μελισσήεντος ἐπ᾽ ὄχθαις
Ἡσίοδος κατέλεξε παρ᾽ ὕδασι Περμησσοῖο.
τὸν δὲ χαλαζήεντα κόρη Τιτηνὶς ἀνῆκε
σκορπίον ἐκ κέντροιο τεθηγμένον, ἦμος ἐπέχρα
Βοιωτῷ τεύχουσα κακὸν μόρον Ὠαρίωνι,
ἀχράντων ὅτε χερσὶ θεῆς ἐδράξατο πέπλων.
αὐτὰρ ὅγε στιβαροῖο κατὰ σφυρὸν ἤλασεν ἴχνευς
σκορπίος ἀπροϊδὴς ὀλίγῳ ὑπὸ λᾶι λοχήσας·
τοῦ δὲ τέρας περίσημον ὑπ᾽ ἀστέρας ἀπλανὲς αὔτως
οἷα κυνηλατέοντος ἀείδελον ἐστήρικται.

Ἀλλὰ σύ γε σταθμοῖο καὶ αὐλίου ἑρπετὰ φύγδην
ῥηϊδίως ἐκ πάντα διώξεαι, ἢ ἀπ᾽ ἐρίπνης,
ἠὲ καὶ αὐτοπόνοιο χαμευνάδος, ἦμος ἀν᾽ ἀγρούς
φεύγων αὐαλέου θέρεος πνιγόεσσαν ἀϋτμήν
αἴθριος ἐν καλάμῃ στορέσας ἀκρέσπερος εὕδῃς,
ἢ καὶ ἀνυδρήεντα παρὲκ λόφον, ἢ ἐνὶ βήσσῃς,
ἐσχατίην ὅθι πλεῖστα κινώπετα βόσκεται ὕλην,
δρυμοὺς καὶ λασιῶνας ἀμορβαίους τε χαράδρας,
καί τε παρὲξ λιστρωτὸν ἅλω δρόμον, ἠδ᾽ ἵνα ποίη
πρῶτα κυϊσκομένη χλοάει σκιάοντας ἰάμνους,
τῆμος ὅτ᾽ ἀζαλέων φολίδων ἀπεδύσατο γῆρας
μῶλυς ἐπιστείβων, ὅτε φωλεὸν εἴαρι φεύγων
ὄμμασιν ἀμβλώσσει, μαράθου δέ ἑ νήχυτος ὄρπηξ
βοσκηθεὶς ὠκύν τε καὶ αὐγήεντα τίθησι.

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Θιβρὴν δ' ἐξελάσεις ὀφίων ἐπιλωβέα κῆρα
καπνείων ἐλάφοιο πολυγλώχινα κεραίην,
ἄλλοτε δ' ἀζαλέην δαίων ἐγγαγίδα πέτρην,
ἣν οὐδὲ κρατεροῖο πυρὸς περικαίνυται ὁρμή·
ἐν δὲ πολυσχιδέος βλήτρου πυρὶ βάλλεο χαίτην·
ἢ σύ γε καχρυόεσσαν ἑλὼν πυριθαλπέα ῥίζαν
καρδάμῳ ἀμμίγδην ἰσοελκέι· μίσγε δ' ἔνοδμον
ζορκὸς ἐνὶ πλάστιγγι νέον κέρας ἀσκελὲς ἱστάς,
καί τε μελανθείου βαρυαέος, ἄλλοτε θείου,
ἄλλοτε δ' ἀσφάλτοιο φέρων ἰσοαχθέα μοῖραν.
ἠὲ σύ γε Θρήϊσσαν ἐνιφλέξαις πυρὶ λᾶαν,
ἥ θ' ὕδατι βρεχθεῖσα σελάσσεται, ἔσβεσε δ' αὐγήν
τυτθὸν ὅτ' ὀδμήσαιτο ἐπιρρανθέντος ἐλαίου.
τὴν ἀπὸ Θρηϊκίου νομέες ποταμοῖο φέρονται
τὸν Πόντον καλέουσι, τόθι Θρήϊκες ἀμορβοί
κριοφάγοι μήλοισιν ἀεργηλοῖσιν ἕπονται.
ναὶ μὴν καὶ βαρύοδμος ἐπὶ φλογὶ ζωγρηθεῖσα
χαλβάνη ἄκνηστίς τε καὶ ἡ πριόνεσσι τομαίη
κέδρος, πουλυόδουσι καταψηχθεῖσα γενείοις,
ἐν φλογιῇ καπνηλὸν ἄγει καὶ φύξιμον ὀδμήν.
οἷς δὴ χηραμὰ κοῖλα καὶ ὑληώρεας εὐνάς
κεινώσεις, δαπέδῳ δὲ πεσὼν ὕπνοιο κορέσσῃ.

Εἰ δὲ τὰ μὲν καμάτου ἐπιδεύεται, ἄγχι δέ τοι νύξ
αὖλιν ἄγει, κοίτου δὲ λιλαίεαι ἔργον ἀνύσσας,
τῆμος δὴ ποταμοῖο πολυρραγέος κατὰ δίνας
ὑδρηλὴν καλάμινθον ὀπάζεο χαιτήεσσαν·
πολλὴ γὰρ λιβάσιν παραέξεται, ἀμφί τε χείλη
ἕρσεται, ἀγλαύροισιν ἀγαλλομένη ποταμοῖσιν.
ἢ σύ γ' ὑποστορέσαιο λύγον πολυανθέα κόψας,
ἢ πόλιον βαρύοδμον, ὃ δὴ ῥίγιστον ὄδωδεν·
ὣς δ' αὔτως ἐχίειον ὀριγανόεσσά τε χαίτη,
ναὶ μὴν ἁβροτόνοιο τό τ' ἄγριον οὔρεσι θάλλει
ἀργεννὴν ὑπὸ βῆσσαν, ἢ ἑρπύλλοιο νομαίου,
ὅς τε φιλόζωος νοτερὴν ἐπιβόσκεται αἶαν
ῥιζοβόλος, λασίοισιν ἀεὶ φύλλοισι κατήρης·
φράζεσθαι δ' ἐπέοικε χαμαιζήλοιο κονύζης
ἄγνου τε βρύα λευκὰ καὶ ἐμπρίοντ' ὀνόγυρον·
αὔτως δὲ τρήχοντα ταμὼν ἄπο κλήματα σίδης,
ἠὲ καὶ ἀσφοδέλοιο νέον πολυαυξέα μόσχον

τρύχνον τε σκύρα τ' ἐχθρά, τά τ' εἴαρι σίνατο βούτην,
ἦμος ὅταν σκυρόωσι βόες καυλεῖα φαγοῦσαι,
ναὶ μὴν πευκεδάνοιο βαρυπνόου, οὗ τε καὶ ὀδμή
θηρί' ἀποσσεύει τε καὶ ἀντιόωντα διώκει.
καὶ τὰ μὲν εἰκαίῃ παράθου ἀγραυλέϊ κοίτῃ,
ἄλλα δὲ φωλειοῖσι· τὰ δὲ ἐμφράξαιο χεείαις.

Εἴ γε μὲν ἐς τεῦχος κεραμήϊον ἠὲ καὶ ὄλπην
κεδρίδας ἐνθρύπτων λιπάοις εὐήρεα γυῖα,
ἢ καὶ πευκεδάνοιο βαρυπνόου, ἄλλοτ' ὀρείου
αὖα καταψήχοιο λίπει ἔνι φύλλα κονύζης·
αὔτως δ' ἀλθήεντ' ἐλελίσφακον, ἐν δέ τε ῥίζαν
σιλφίου, ἥν κνηστῆρι κατατρίψειαν ὀδόντες.
πολλάκι καὶ βροτέην σιάλων ὑποέτρεσαν ὀδμήν.
εἰ δὲ σύ γε τρίψας ὀλίγῳ ἐν βάμματι κάμπην
κηπαίην δροσόεσσαν ἐπὶ χλωρηΐδα νώτῳ,
ἠὲ καὶ ἀγριάδος μολόχης ἐγκύμονι κάρφει
γυῖα πέριξ λιπάσειας, ἀναίμακτός κεν ἰαύοις.
ψήχεο δ' ἐν στέρνῳ προβαλὼν μυλόεντι θυείης
ἐν μέν θ' ἀβροτόνοιο δύω κομόωντας ὀράμνους
καρδάμῳ ἀμμίγδην—ὀδελοῦ δέ οἱ αἴσιος ὁλκή—
ἐν δὲ χεροπληθῆ καρπὸν νεοθηλέα δαυχμοῦ
λειαίνειν τριπτῆρι. τὰ δὲ τροχοειδέα πλάσσων
τέρσαι ὑποσκιόεντι βαλὼν ἀνεμώδεϊ χώρῳ·
αὖα δ' ἐν ὄλπῃ θρύπτε, καὶ αὐτίκα γυῖα λιπαίνοις.

Εἴ γε μὲν ἐκ τριόδοιο μεμιγμένα κνώδαλα χύτρῳ
ζωὰ νέον θορνύντα καὶ ἐν θρόνα τοιάδε βάλλῃς,
δήεις οὐλομένῃσιν ἀλεξητήριον ἄτης·
ἐν μὲν γὰρ μυελοῖο νεοσφαγέος ἐλάφοιο
δραχμάων τρίφατον δεκάδος καταβάλλεο βρῖθος,
ἐν δὲ τρίτην ῥοδέου μοῖραν χοός, ἥν τε θυωροί
πρώτην μεσσατίην τε πολύτριπτόν καλέονται,
ἰσόμορον δ' ὠμοῖο χέειν ἀργῆτος ἐλαίου,
τετράμορον κηροῖο· τὰ δ' ἐν περιηγέϊ γάστρῃ
θάλπε κατασπέρχων, ἔστ' ἂν περὶ σάρκες ἀκάνθης
μελδόμεναι θρύπτωνται· ἔπειτα δὲ λάζεο τυκτήν
εὐεργῆ λάκτιν, τὰ δὲ μυρία πάντα ταράσσειν
συμφύρδην ὀφίεσσιν· ἑκὰς δ' ἀπόερσον ἀκάνθας,
καὶ γὰρ ταῖς κακοεργὸς ὁμῶς ἐνιτέτροφεν ἰός.

γυῖα δὲ πάντα λίπαζε καὶ εἰς ὁδόν, ἢ ἐπὶ κοῖτον,
ἢ ὅταν αὐαλέου θέρεος μεθ' ἀλώϊα ἔργα
ζωσάμενος θρίναξι βαθὺν διακρίνεαι ἄντλον.
Εἰ δέ που ἐν δακέεσσιν ἀφαρμάκτῳ χροῒ κύρσῃς
ἄκμηνος σίτων, ὅτε δὴ κακὸν ἄνδρας ἰάπτει,
αἶψά κεν ἡμετέρῃσιν ἐρωήσειας ἐφετμῇς.
Τῶν ἤτοι θήλεια παλίγκοτος ἀντομένοισι
δάχματι, πλειοτέρη δὲ καὶ ὁλκαίην ἐπὶ σειρήν·
τοὔνεκα καὶ θανάτοιο θοώτερος ἵξεται αἶσα.
Ἀλλ' ἤτοι θέρεος βλαβερὸν δάκος ἐξαλέασθαι
Πληϊάδων φάσιας δεδοκημένος, αἵ θ' ὑπὸ Ταύρου
ἀλκαίην ψαίρουσαι ὀλίζωνες φορέονται,
ἢ ὅτε σὺν τέκνοισι θερειομένοισιν ἀβοσκής
φωλειοῦ λοχάδην ὑπὸ γωλεὰ διψὰς ἰαύῃ,
ἢ ὅτε λίπτῃσιν μεθ' ἑὸν νομόν, ἢ ἐπὶ κοῖτον
ἐκ νομοῦ ὑπνώσσουσα κίῃ κεκορημένη ὕλης.
Μὴ σύ γ' ἐνὶ τριόδοισι τύχοις ὅτε δάχμα πεφυζώς
περκνὸς ἔχις θυίῃσι τυπῇ ψολόεντος ἐχίδνης,
ἡνίκα, θορνυμένου ἔχιος, θολερῷ κυνόδοντι
θουρὰς ἀμὺξ ἐμφῦσα κάρην ἀπέκοψεν ὁμεύνου.
οἱ δὲ πατρὸς λώβην μετεκίαθον αὐτίκα τυτθοί
γεινόμενοι ἐχιῆες, ἐπεὶ διὰ μητρὸς ἀραιήν
γαστέρ' ἀναβρώσαντες ἀμήτορες ἐξεγένοντο·
οἴη γὰρ βαρύθει ὑπὸ κύματος, οἱ δὲ καθ' ὕλην
ᾠοτόκοι ὄφιες λεπυρὴν θάλπουσι γενέθλην.
Μηδ' ὅτε ῥικνῆεν φολίδων περὶ γῆρας ἀμέρσας
ἂψ ἀναφοιτήσῃ νεαρῇ κεχαρημένος ἥβῃ,
ἢ ὁπότε σκαρθμοὺς ἐλάφων ὀχεῇσιν ἀλύξας
ἀνδράσ' ἐνισκίμψῃ χολόων γυιοφθόρον ἰόν.
ἔξοχα γὰρ δολιχοῖσι κινωπησταῖς κοτέουσι
νεβροτόκοι καὶ ζόρκες, ἀνιχνεύουσι δὲ πάντη
τρόχμαλά θ' αἱμασιάς τε καὶ ἰλυοὺς ἐρέοντες,
σμερδαλέῃ μυκτῆρος ἐπισπέρχοντες ἀϋτμῇ.
Ναὶ μὴν καὶ νιφόεσσα φέρει δυσπαίπαλος Ὄθρυς
φοινὰ δάκη, κοίλη τε φάραγξ καὶ τρηχέες ἀγμοί
καὶ λέπας ὑλῆεν, τόθι δίψιος ἐμβατέει σήψ.
χροιὴν δ' ἀλλόφατόν τε καὶ οὐ μίαν οἰαδὸν ἴσχει,
αἰὲν ἐειδόμενος χώρῳ ἵνα χηραμὰ τεύξῃ.
τῶν οἱ μὲν λίθακάς τε καὶ ἕρμακας ἐνναίοντες
παυρότεροι, τρηχεῖς δὲ καὶ ἔμπυροι· οὔ κεν ἐκείνων

ἀνδράσι δάχμα πέλοι μεταμώνιον ἀλλὰ κάκηθες.
ἄλλος δ' αὖ κόχλοισι δομὴν ἰνδάλλεται αἴης,
ἄλλῳ δ' ἐγχλοάουσα λοπὶς περιμήκεα κύκλον
ποικίλον αἰόλλει· πολέες δ' ἀμάθοισι μιγέντες
σπείρῃ λεπρύνονται ἀλινδόμενοι ψαμάθοισι.
Φράζεο δ' αὐαλέῃσιν ἐπιφρικτὴν φολίδεσσιν
ἀσπίδα φοινήεσσαν, ἀμυδρότατον δάκος ἄλλων,
[τῇ μὲν γάρ τε κέλευθος ὁμῶς κατ' ἐναντίον ἕρπει
ἀτραπὸν ὁλκαίην δολιχῷ μηρύγματι γαστρός.]
ἢ καὶ σμερδαλέον μὲν ἔχει δέμας, ἐν δὲ κελεύθῳ
νωχελὲς ἐξ ὁλκοῖο φέρει βάρος, ὑπναλέῳ δέ
αἰὲν ἐπιλλίζουσα φαείνεται ἐνδυκὲς ὄσσῳ·
ἀλλ' ὅταν ἢ δοῦπον νέον οὔασιν ἠέ τιν' αὐγήν
ἀθρήσῃ, νωθρῇ μὲν ἀπὸ ῥέθεος βάλεν ὕπνον,
ὁλκῷ δὲ τροχόεσσαν ἅλων εἱλίξατο γαίῃ,
λευγαλέον δ' ἀνὰ μέσσα κάρη πεφρικὸς ἀείρει.
τῆς ἤτοι μῆκος μέν, ὃ κύντατον ἔτρεφεν αἶα,
ὀργυιῇ μετρητόν, ἀτὰρ περιβάλλεται εὖρος
ὅσσον τ' αἰγανέης δορατοξόος ἤνυσε τέκτων
εἰς ἐνοπὴν ταύρων τε βαρυφθόγγων τε λεόντων.
χροιῇ δ' ἄλλοτε μὲν ψαφαρὸς ἐπιδέδρομε νώτοις,
ἢ περὶ μηλινόεσσα καὶ αἰόλος, ἄλλοτε τεφρή,
πολλάκι δ' αἰθαλόεσσα μελαινομένῃ ὑπὸ βώλῳ
Αἰθιόπων, οἵην τε πολύστομος εἰς ἅλα Νεῖλος
πλησάμενος κατέχευεν ἄσιν, προὔτυψε δὲ πόντῳ.
δοιοὶ δε σκυνίοισιν ὑπερφαίνουσι μέτωπον
οἷα τύλοι, τὸ δ' ἔνερθεν ὑπαιφοινίσσεται ὄθμα
πολλὸν ὑπὲρ σπείρης, ψαφαρὸς δ' ἀναπίμπραται αὐχήν
ἄκριτα ποιφύσσοντος ὅτ' ἀντομένοισιν ὁδουροῖς
ἄϊδα προσμάξηται ἐπὶ ζαμενὲς κοτέουσα.
τῆς ἤτοι πίσυρες κοῖλοι ὑπένερθεν ὀδόντες
ἀγκύλοι ἐν γναθμοῖς δολιχήρεες ἐρρίζωνται
ἰοδόκοι, μυχάτους δὲ χιτὼν ὑμένεσσι καλύπτει·
ἔνθεν ἀμείλικτον γυίοις ἐνερεύγεται ἰόν.
Ἐχθρῶν που τέρα κεῖνα καρήασιν ἐμπελάσειε·
σαρκὶ γὰρ οὔτ' ἐπὶ δάχμα φαείνεται, οὔτε δυσαλθές
οἶδος ἐπιφλέγεται· καμάτου δ' ἄτερ ὄλλυται ἀνήρ,
ὑπνηλὸν δ' ἐπὶ νῶκαρ ἄγει βιότοιο τελευτήν.

Ἰχνεύμων δ’ ἄρα μοῦνος ἀκήριος ἀσπίδος ὁρμήν,
ἠμὲν ὅτ’ ἐς μόθον εἶσιν, ἀλεύεται, ἠδ’ ὅτε λυγρά
θαλπούσης ὄφιος κηριτρόφου ὤεα γαίῃ
πάντα διεσκήνιψε, καὶ ἐξ ὑμένων ἐτίναξε
δαρδάπτων, ὀλοοῖς δὲ συνερραθάγησεν ὀδοῦσι.
μορφῇ δ’ ἰχνευτᾶο κινωπέτου οἷον ἀμυδρῆς
ἴκτιδος, ἥ τ’ ὄρνισι κατοικιδίῃσιν ὄλεθρον
μαίεται ἐξ ὕπνοιο συναρπάζουσα πετεύρων
ἔνθα λέχος τεύχονται ἐπίκριοι, ἢ καὶ ἀφαυρά
τέκνα τιθαιβώσσουσιν ὑπὸ πλευρῇσι θέρουσαι.
ἀλλ’ ὅταν Αἰγύπτοιο παρὰ θρυόεντας ἰάμνους
ἀσπίσι μῶλον ἔχωσιν ἀθέσφατον εἰλικοέσσαις,
αὐτίχ’ ὁ μὲν ποταμόνδε καθήλατο, τύψε δὲ κώλοις
τάρταρον εἰλυόεσσαν, ἄφαρ δ’ ἐφορύξατο γυῖα
πηλῷ ἀλινδηθεὶς ὀλίγον δέμας, εἰσόκε λάχνην
Σείριος ἀζήνῃ τεύξῃ δ’ ἄγναπτον ὀδόντι·
τῆμος δ’ ἠὲ κάρην λιχμήρεος ἑρπηστᾶο
σμερδαλέης ἔβρυξεν ἐπάλμενος, ἠὲ καὶ οὐρῆς
ἁρπάξας βρυόεντος ἔσω ποταμοῖο κύλισεν.

Εὖ δ’ ἂν ἐχιδνήεσσαν ἴδοις πολυδευκέα μορφήν,
ἄλλοτε μὲν δολιχήν, ὁτὲ παυράδα· τοιάδ’ ἀέξει
Εὐρώπη τ’ Ἀσίη τε· τὰ δ’ οὐκ ἐπιείκελα δήεις.
ἤτοι ἀν’ Εὐρώπην μὲν ὀλίζονα, καί θ’ ὑπὲρ ἄκρους
ῥώθωνας κεραοί τε καὶ ἀργίλιπες τελέθουσιν,
αἱ μὲν ὑπὸ Σκείρωνος ὄρη Παμβώνιά τ’ αἴπη,
Ῥυπαῖον Κόρακός τε πάγον πολιόν τ’ Ἀσέληνον·
Ἀσὶς δ’ ὀργυιόεντα καὶ ἐς πλέον ἑρπετὰ βόσκει,
οἷα περὶ τρηχὺν Βουκάρτερον, ἢ καὶ ἐρυμνός
Αἰσαγέης πρηὼν καὶ Κέρκαφος ἐντὸς ἐέργει.
τῶν ἤτοι βρεχμοὶ μὲν ἐπὶ πλάτος, ἠδ’ ὑπὲρ ἄκρον
ὁλκαῖον σπείρης κολοβὴν ἐπελίσσεται οὐρήν
ἀζαλέαις φρίσσουσαν ἐπηετανὸν φολίδεσσι·
νωθεῖ δ’ ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα διὰ δρυμὰ νίσεται ὁλκῷ.
Πᾶς δέ τοι ὀξυκάρηνος ἰδεῖν ἔχις, ἄλλοτε μῆκος
μάσσων, ἄλλοτε παῦρος· ἀκιδνότερος δὲ κατ’ εὖρος
νηδύος, ἡ δὲ μύουρος ὑπ’ ἀλκαίῃ τετάνυσται,
ἴσως μὲν πεδανὴ δολιχοῦ ὑπὸ πείρασιν ὁλκοῦ,
ἴσως δ’ ἐκ φολίδων τετρυμένη· αὐτὰρ ἐνωπῆς
γλήνεα φοινίσσει τεθοωμένος, ὀξὺ δὲ δικρῇ

γλώσσῃ λιχμάζων νέατον σκωλύπτεται οὐρήν.
Κωκυτὸν δ' ἐχιαῖον ἐπικλείουσιν ὁδῖται.
τοῦ μὲν ὑπὲρ κυνόδοντε δύω χροΐ τεκμαίρονται
ἰὸν ἐρευγόμενοι, πλέονες δέ τοι αἰὲν ἐχίδνης·
οὔλῳ γὰρ στομίῳ ἐμφύεται, ἀμφὶ δὲ σαρκί
ῥεῖά κεν εὐρυνθέντας ἐπιφράσσαιο χαλινούς.
  Τῆς καὶ ἀπὸ πληγῆς φέρεται λίπει εἴκελος ἰχώρ,
ἄλλοτε δ' αἱματόεις, τοτὲ δ' ἄχροος· ἡ δ' ἐπί οἱ σάρξ
πολλάκι μὲν χλοάουσα βαρεῖ ἀναδέδρομεν οἴδει,
ἄλλοτε φοινίσσουσα, τότ' εἴδεται ἄντα πελιδνή·
ἄλλοτε δ' ὑδατόεν κυέει βάρος, αἱ δὲ χαμηλαί
πομφόλυγες ὡς εἴ τε περὶ φλύκταιναι ἀραιαί
οἷα πυρικμήτοιο χροὸς πλαδόωσιν ὕπερθεν.
σηπεδόνες δέ οἱ ἀμφὶς ἐπίδρομοι, αἱ μὲν ἄτερθεν,
αἱ δὲ κατὰ πληγὴν ἰοειδέα λοιγὸν ἱεῖσαι.
πᾶν δ' ἐπί οἱ δριμεῖα δέμας καταβόσκεται ἄτη
ὀξέα πυρπολέουσα· κατ' ἀσφάραγον δέ τε λυγμοί
κίονά τε ξυνιόντες ἐπασσύτεροι κλονέουσιν.
ἀμφὶ καὶ εἰλίγγοις δέμας ἄχθεται· αἶψα δὲ γούνοις
ἀδρανίη βαρύθουσα καὶ ἰξύσι μέρμερος ἵζει,
ἐν δὲ κάρῃ σκοτόεν βάρος ἵσταται· αὐτὰρ ὁ κάμνων
ἄλλοτε μὲν δίψῃ φάρυγα ξηραίνεται αὔῃ,
πολλάκι δ' ἐξ ὀνύχων ἴσχει κρύος, ἀμφὶ δὲ γυίοις
χειμερίη ζαλόωσα πέριξ βέβριθε χάλαζα.
πολλάκι δ' αὖ χολόεντας ἀπήρυγε νηδύος ὄγκους
ὠχραίνων δέμας ἀμφίς· ὁ δὲ νοτέων περὶ γυίοις
ψυχρότερος νιφετοῖο βολῆς περιχεύεται ἱδρώς.
χροιὴν δ' ἄλλοτε μὲν μολίβου ζοφοειδέος ἴσχει,
ἄλλοτε δ' ἠερόεσσα, ὅτ' ἄνθεσιν εἴσατο χαλκοῦ.

  Εὖ δ' ἂν καὶ δολόεντα μάθοις ἐπιόντα κεράστην
ἠΰτ' ἔχιν· τῷ γάρ τε δομὴν ἰνδάλλεται ἴσην.
ἤτοι ὁ μὲν κόλος ἐστίν, ὁ δ' αὖ κεράεσσι πεποιθώς,
ἄλλοτε μὲν πισύρεσσιν, ὅτ' ἐν δοιοῖσι κεράστης,
χροιῇ δὲ ψαφαρῇ λεπρύνεται, ἐν δ' ἀμάθοισιν
ἢ καὶ ἁματροχιῇσι κατὰ στίβον ἐνδυκὲς αὔει.
τῶν ἤτοι σπείρῃσιν ὁ μὲν θοὸς ἀντία θύνει
ἀτραπὸν ἰθεῖαν δολιχῷ μηρύματι γαστρός·
αὐτὰρ ὅ γε σκαιὸς μεσάτῳ ἐπαλίνδεται ὁλκῷ
οἶμον ὁδοιπλανέων σκολιὴν τετρηχότι νώτῳ,

τράμπιδος ὁλκαίης ἀκάτῳ ἴσος ἥ τε δι᾽ ἅλμης
πλευρὸν ὅλον βάπτουσα, κακοσταθέοντος ἀήτεω,
εἰς ἄνεμον βεβίηται ἀπόκρουστος λιβὸς οὔρῳ.
Τοῦ μέν, ὅτ᾽ ἐμβρύξῃσιν, ἀεικέλιον περὶ νύχμα
ἥλῳ ἐειδόμενον τυλόεν πέλει· αἱ δὲ πελιδναί
φλύκταιναι πέμφιξιν ἐειδόμεναι ὑετοῖο
δάχμα πέρι πλάζονται ἀμυδρήεσσαι ἐς ὠπήν.
ἤτοι ἀφαυρότερον τελέει πόνον, ἐννέα δ᾽ αὐγάς
ἠελίου μογέων ἐπιόσσεται, οἷσι κεράστης
οὐλόμενος κακοεργὸν ἐνιχραύσῃ κυνόδοντα.
διπλῷ δ᾽ ἐν βουβῶνι καὶ ἰγνύσιν ἀσκελὲς αὔτως
μόχθος ἐνιτρέφεται, πελιὸς δέ οἱ ἐμφέρεται χρώς·
τῶν δέ τε καμνόντων ὀλίγος περὶ ἅψεα θυμός
λείπεται ἐκ καμάτοιο· μόγις γε μὲν ἔκφυγον αἶσαν.

Σῆμα δέ τοι δάκεος αἱμορρόου αὖτις ἐνίψω,
ὅς τε κατ᾽ ἀμβαθμοὺς πετρώδεας ἐνδυκὲς αὔει,
τρηχὺν ὑπάρπεζον θαλάμην ὀλιγήρεα τεύχων·
ἔνθ᾽ εἰλυθμὸν ἔχεσκεν ἐπεί τ᾽ ἐκορέσσατο φορβῆς.
μήκει μὲν ποδὸς ἴχνει ἰσάζεται, αὐτὰρ ἐπ᾽ εὖρος
τέτρυται μύουρος ἀπὸ φλογέοιο καρήνου,
ἄλλοτε μὲν χροιῇ ψολόεις, ὁτὲ δ᾽ ἔμπαλιν αἰθός.
δειρὴν δ᾽ ἐσφήκωται ἅλις, πεδανὴ δέ οἱ οὐρή
ζαχραὲς θλιφθεῖσα παρομφάλιος τετάνυσται.
τοῦ μὲν ὑπὲρ νιφόεντα κεράατα δοιὰ μετώπῳ
ἔγκειται πάρνοψι φάη λογάδας τι προσεικεῦς·
σμερδαλέον δ᾽ ἐπί οἱ λαμυρὸν πέφρικε κάρηνον.
δοχμὰ δ᾽ ἐπισκάζων ὀλίγον δέμας οἷα κεράστης
μέσσου ὅ γ᾽ ἐκ νώτου βαιὸν πλόον αἰὲν ὀκέλλει,
γαίῃ ἐπιθλίβων νηδύν, φολίσιν δὲ καὶ οἴμῳ
παῦρον ὑποψοφέων καλάμης χύσιν οἷα διέρπει.
Νύχματι δ᾽ ἀρχομένῳ μὲν ἐπιτρέχει ἄχροον οἶδος
κυάνεον· κραδίην δὲ κακὸν περιτέτροφεν ἄλγος,
γαστὴρ δ᾽ ὑδατόεσσα διέσσυτο. Νυκτὶ δὲ πρώτῃ
αἷμα διὲκ ῥινῶν τε καὶ αὐχένος ἠδὲ δι᾽ ὤτων
πιδύεται, χολόεντι νέον πεφορυγμένον ἰῷ,
οὖρα δὲ φοινίσσοντα παρέδραμεν· αἱ δ᾽ ἐπὶ γυίοις
ὠτειλαὶ ῥήγνυνται, ἐπειγόμεναι χροὸς ἄτῃ.
μήποτέ τοι θήλει᾽ αἱμορροῒς ἰὸν ἐνείῃ·
τῆς γὰρ ὀδαξαμένης τὰ μὲν ἀθρόα πίμπραται οὖλα

ῥιζόθεν, ἐξ ὀνύχων δὲ κατείβεται ἀσταγὲς αἷμα,
οἱ δὲ φόνῳ μυδόεντες ἀναπλείουσιν ὀδόντες.

Εἰ ἔτυμον, Τροίηθεν ἰοῦσ᾽ ἐχαλέψατο φύλοις
Αἰνελένη, ὅτε νῆα πολύστροιβον παρὰ Νεῖλον
ἔστησαν βορέαο κακὴν προφυγόντες ὁμοκλήν,
ἦμος ἀποψύχοντα κυβερνητῆρα Κάνωβον
Θώνιος ἐν ψαμάθοις ἀθρήσατο· τύψε γὰρ εὐνῇ
αὐχέν᾽ ἀποθλιφθεῖσα καὶ ἐν βαρὺν ἤρυγεν ἰόν
αἱμοροῒς θήλεια, κακὸν δέ οἱ ἔχραε κοῖτον.
τῶ δ᾽ Ἑλένη μέσον ὁλκὸν ἐνέθλασε, θραῦσε δ᾽ ἀκάνθης
δεσμὰ πέριξ νωταῖα, ῥάχις δ᾽ ἐξέδραμε γυίων·
ἐξόθεν αἱμορόοι σκολιοπλανέες τε κεράσται
οἷοι χωλεύουσι κακηπελίῃ βαρύθοντες.

Εὖ δ᾽ ἂν σηπεδόνος γνοίης δέμας, ἄλλο μὲν εἴδει
αἱμορόῳ σύμμορφον, ἀτὰρ στίβον ἀντί᾽ ὀκέλλει,
καὶ κεράων δ᾽ ἔμπλην δέμας ἄμμορον, ἡ δέ νυ χροιή
οἵη περ τάπιδος λασίῳ ἐπιδέδρομε τέρφει·
κράατι δ᾽ ἐμβαρύθει, ἐλάχεια δὲ φαίνεται οὐρή
ἐσσυμένῃ· σκολιὴν γὰρ ὁμῶς ἐπιτείνεται ἄκρην.
Τῆς δ᾽ ἤτοι ὀλοὸν καὶ ἐπώδυνον ἔπλετο ἕλκος
σηπεδόνος· νέμεται δὲ μέλας ὀλοφώϊος ἰός
πᾶν δέμας, αὐαλέῃ δὲ περὶ χροῒ καρφομένη θρίξ
σκίδναται ὡς γήρεια καταψηχθέντος ἀκάνθης·
ἐκ μὲν γὰρ κεφαλῆς τε καὶ ὀφρύος ἀνδρὶ τυπέντι
ῥαίονται, βλεφάρων δὲ μέλαιν᾽ ἐξέφθιτο λάχνη·
ἄψεα δὲ τροχόεντες ἐπιστίζουσι μὲν ἀλφοί,
λεῦκαί τ᾽ ἀργινόεσσαν ἐπισσεύουσιν ἔφηλιν.

Ναὶ μὴν διψάδος εἶδος ὁμώσεται αἰὲν ἐχίδνῃ
παυροτέρῃ, θανάτου δὲ θοώτερος ἵξεται αἶσα
οἷσιν ἐνισκίμψῃ βλοσυρὸν δάκος· ἤτοι ἀραιή
αἰὲν ὑποζοφόεσσα μελαίνεται ἄκροθεν οὐρή.
Δάχματι δ᾽ ἐμφλέγεται κραδίη πρόπαν, ἀμφὶ δὲ καύσῳ
χείλε᾽ ὑπ᾽ ἀζαλέης αὐαίνεται ἄβροχα δίψης·
αὐτὰρ ὅ γ᾽, ἠΰτε ταῦρος ὑπὲρ ποταμοῖο νενευκώς
χανδὸν ἀμέτρητον δέχεται ποτόν, εἰσόκε νηδύς
ὀμφαλὸν ἐκρήξειε, χέῃ δ᾽ ὑπεραχθέα φόρτον.

Ὠγύγιος δ’ ἄρα μῦθος ἐν αἰζηοῖσι φορεῖται,
ὡς, ὁπότ’ οὐρανὸν ἔσχε Κρόνου πρεσβίστατον αἷμα,
**Ν**ειμάμενος κασίεσσιν ἑκὰς περικυδέας ἀρχάς
**Ι**δμοσύνῃ, νεότητα γέρας πόρεν ἡμερίοισι
**Κ**υδαίνων· δὴ γάρ ῥα πυρὸς ληΐστορ’ ἔνιπτον.
**Α**φρονες· οὐ γὰρ τῆς γε κακοφραδίῃς ἀπόνηντο·
**Ν**ωθεῖ γὰρ κάμνοντες ἀμορβεύοντο λεπάργῳ
**Δ**ῶρα· πολύσκαρθμος δὲ κεκαυμένος αὐχένα δίψῃ
**Ρ**ώετο, γωλειοῖσι δ’ ἰδὼν ὁλκήρεα θῆρα
**Ο**ὐλοὸν ἐλλιτάνευε κακῇ ἐπαλαλκέμεν ἄτῃ
Σαίνων· αὐτὰρ ὁ βρῖθος, ὃ δή ῥ’ ἀνεδέξατο νώτοις,
ᾔτεεν ἄφρονα δῶρον, ὁ δ’ οὐκ ἀπανήνατο χρειώ.
ἐξότε γηραλέον μὲν ἀεὶ φλόον ἑρπετὰ βάλλει
ὁλκήρη, θνητοὺς δὲ κακὸν περὶ γῆρας ὀπάζει·
νοῦσον δ’ ἀζαλέην βρωμήτορος οὐλομένη θήρ
δέξατο, καί τε τυπῇσιν ἀμυδροτέρῃσιν ἰάπτει.

Νῦν δ’ ἄγε χερσύδροιο καὶ ἀσπίδος εἴρεο μορφάς
ἰσαίας· πληγῇ δὲ κακήθεα σήμαθ’ ὁμαρτεῖ·
πᾶσα γὰρ αὐαλέη ῥινὸς περὶ σάρκα μυσαχθής
νειόθι πιτναμένη μυδόεν τεκμήρατο βρύχμα,
σηπεδόσι φλιδόωσα· τὰ δ’ ἄλγεα φῶτα δαμάζει
μυρία πυρπολέοντα, θοαὶ δ’ ἐπὶ γυῖα χέονται
πρηδόνες ἄλλοθεν ἄλλαι ἐπημοιβοὶ κλονέουσαι.
Ὅς δ’ ἤτοι τὸ πρὶν μὲν ὑπὸ βροχθώδεϊ λίμνῃ
ἄσπειστον βατράχοισι φέρει κότον· ἀλλ’ ὅταν ὕδωρ
Σείριος αὐήνῃσι, τρύγῃ δ’ ἐν πυθμένι λίμνης,
καὶ τόθ’ ὅ γ’ ἐν χέρσῳ τελέθει ψαφαρός τε καὶ ἄχρους,
θάλπων ἠελίῳ βλοσυρὸν δέμας· ἐν δὲ κελεύθοις
γλώσσῃ ποιφύγδην νέμεται διψήρεας ὄγμους.

Τὸν δὲ μετ’ ἀμφίσβαιναν ὀλίζωνα βραδύθουσαν
δήεις ἀμφικάρηνον, ἀεὶ γλήνῃσιν ἀμυδρήν·
ἀμβλὺ γὰρ ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἐπιπρονένευκε γένειον
νόσφιν ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων· χροιῇ γε μὲν ἠΰτε γαίης,
ῥωγαλέον φορέουσα περιστιγὲς αἰόλον ἔρφος.
Τὴν μὲν, ὅθ’ ἁδρύνηται, ὀροιτύποι, οἷα βατῆρα
κόψαντες ῥάδικα πολυστεφέος κοτίνοιο
δέρματος ἐσκύλευσαν, ὅτε πρώτιστα πέφανται
πρόσθε βοῆς κόκκυγος ἐαρτέρου· ἡ δ’ ὀνίνησι

ῥινῷ δυσπαθέοντας, ὅτ' ἐν παλάμῃσιν ἀεργοί
μάλκαι ἐπιπροθέωσιν ὑπὸ κρυμοῖο δαμέντων
ἠδ' ὁπόταν νεύρων ξανάᾳ κεχαλασμένα δεσμά.

Δήεις καὶ σκυτάλην ἐναλίγκιον ἀμφισβαίνῃ
εἶδος, ἀτὰρ πάχετόν τε καὶ οὐτιδανὴν ἐπὶ σειρήν
μάσσον', ἐπεὶ σκυτάλης μὲν ὅσον σμινύοιο τέτυκται
στειλειόν πάχετος, τῆς δ' ἕλμινθος πέλει ὁλκός
ἠὲ καὶ ἔντερα γῆς οἷα τρέφει ὄμβριος αἶα.
οὐδ' ἄρ', ὅταν χαράδρεια λίπῃ καὶ ῥωγάδα πέτρην
ἦρος ἀεξομένου ὁπόσ' ἑρπετὰ γαῖα φαείνῃ,
ἀκρεμόνος μαράθοιο χυτὸν περιβόσκεται ἔρνος,
εὖτ' ἂν ὑπ' ἠελίοιο περὶ φλόον ἑρπετὰ βάλλῃ,
ἀλλ' ἥ γ' ἀρπέζαις τε καὶ ἐν νεμέεσσι πεσοῦσα
φωλεύει βαθύϋπνος, ἀπ' εἰκαίης δὲ βοτεῖται
γαίης, οὐδ' ἀπὸ δίψος ἀλέξεται ἱεμένη περ.

Τεκμαίρευ δ' ὀλίγον μὲν ἀτὰρ προφερέστατον ἄλλων
ἑρπηστῶν βασιλῆα· τὸ μὲν δέμας ὀξυκάρηνος,
ξανθός, ἐπὶ τρία δῶρα φέρων μῆκός τε καὶ ἰθύν.
οὐκ ἄρα δὴ κείνου σπειραχθέα κνώδαλα γαίης
ἰυγὴν μίμνουσιν ὅτ' ἐς νομὸν ἠὲ καὶ ὕλην
ἠὲ καὶ ἀρδηθμοῖο μεσημβρινὸν ἀΐξαντες
μείρονται, φύζῃ δὲ παλιντροπέες φορέονται.
Τύμματι δ' ἐπρήσθη φωτὸς δέμας, αἱ δ' ἀπὸ γυίων
σάρκες ἀπορρείουσι πελιδναί τε ζοφεραί τε·
οὐδέ τις οὐδ' οἰωνὸς ὑπὲρ νέκυν ἴχνια τείνας—
αἰγυπιοὶ γῦπές τε κόραξ τ' ὀμβρήρεα κρώζων,
οὐδὲ μὲν ὅσσα τε φῦλ' ὀνομάζεται οὔρεσι θηρῶν
δαίνυνται· τοῖόν περ ἀϋτμένα δεινὸν ἐφίει.
εἰ δ' ὀλοὴ βούβρωστις ἀϊδρείῃφι πελάσσῃ,
αὐτοῦ οἱ θάνατός τε καὶ ὠκέα μοῖρα τέτυκται.

Κῆρα δέ τοι δρυΐναο πιφαύσκεο, τόν τε χέλυδρον
ἐξέτεροι καλέουσιν· ὁ δ' ἐν δρυσὶν οἰκία τεύξας
ἢ ὅ γέ που φηγοῖσιν ὀρεσκεύει περὶ βήσσας
ὕδρον μιν καλέουσι, μετεξέτεροι δὲ χέλυδρον,
ὅς τε βρύα προλιπὼν καὶ ἕλος καὶ ὁμήθεα λίμνην
ἀγρώσσων λειμῶσι μολουρίδας ἢ βατραχῖδας
σπέρχεται ἐκ μύωπος ἀήθεα δέγμενος ὁρμήν·

ἔνθα κατὰ πρέμνον κοίλης ὑπεδύσατο φηγοῦ
ὀξὺς ἀλείς, κοῖτον δὲ βαθεῖ ἐνεδείματο θάμνῳ.
αἰθαλόεις μὲν νῶτα, κάρη γε μὲν ἀρπεδὲς αὔτως
ὕδρῳ ἐϊσκόμενος· τὸ δ' ἀπὸ χροὸς ἐχθρὸν ἄηται
οἷον ὅτε πλαδόωντα περὶ σκύλα καὶ δέρε' ἵππων
γναπτόμενοι μυδόωσιν ὑπ' ἀρβήλοισι λάθαργοι.
   Ἤτοι ὅταν κώληπι ἢ ἐν ποδὸς ἴχνεϊ τύψῃ,
χρωτὸς ἄπο πνιγόεσσα κεδαιομένη φέρετ' ὀδμή.
τοῦ δ' ἤτοι περὶ τύμμα μέλαν κορθύεται οἶδος,
ἐν δὲ νόον πεδόωσιν ἀλυσθαίνοντος ἀνῖαι
ἐχθόμεναι, χροιὴ δὲ μόγῳ αὐαίνεται ἀνδρός.
ῥινοὶ δὲ πλαδόωσιν ἐπὶ χροΐ, τοῖά μιν ἰὸς
ὀξὺς ἀεὶ νεμέθων ἐπιβόσκεται· ἀμφὶ καὶ ἀχλύς
ὄσσε κατακρύπτουσα κακοσταθέοντα δαμάζει·
οἱ δέ τε μηκάζουσι, περιπνιγέες τε πέλονται,
οὖρα δ' ἀπέστυπται· τοτὲ δ' ἔμπαλιν ὑπνώοντες
ῥέγκουσιν, λυγμοῖσι βαρυνόμενοι θαμέεσσιν,
ἢ ἀπερευγόμενοι ἔμετον χολοειδέα δειρῆς,
ἄλλοτε δ' αἱματόεντα· κακὴ δ' ἐπὶ δίψιος ἄτη
ἐσχατίῃ μογέουσι τρόμον κατεχεύατο γυίοις.

   Φράζεο δὲ χλοάοντα δαεὶς κυανόν τε δράκοντα,
ὅν ποτε Παιήων λασίῃ ἐνεθρέψατο φηγῷ
Πηλίῳ ἐν νιφόεντι Πελεθρόνιον κατὰ βῆσσαν.
ἤτοι ὅγ' ἄγλαυρος μὲν ἐείδεται, ἐν δὲ γενείῳ
τρίστοιχοι ἑκάτερθε περιστιχόωσιν ὀδόντες·
πίονα δ' ἐν σκυνίοισιν ὕπ' ὄθματα· νέρθε δὲ πώγων
αἰὲν ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνι χολοίβαφος. οὐ μὲν ὅ γ' αὔτως
ἐγχρίμψας ἤλγυνε, καὶ ἢν ἔκπαγλα χαλεφθῇ·
βληχρὸν γὰρ μυὸς οἷα μυληβόρου ἐν χροῒ νύχμα
εἴδεται αἱμαχθέντος ὑπὸ κραντῆρος ἀραιοῦ.
   Τῷ μέν τ' ἔκπαγλον κοτέων βασιλήϊος ὄρνις
αἰετὸς ἐκ παλαχῆς ἐπαέξεται, ἀντία δ' ἐχθρήν
δῆριν ἄγει γενύεσσιν ὅταν βλώσκοντα καθ' ὕλην
δέρκηται· πάσας γὰρ ὅ γ' ἠρήμωσε καλιάς,
αὔτως ὀρνίθων τε τόκον κτίλα τ' ὤεα βρύκων.
αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῦ καὶ ῥῆνα καὶ ἠνεμόεντα λαγωόν
ῥεῖα δράκων ἤμερσε νέον μάρψαντος ὄνυξι
θάμνου ὑπαΐξας· ὁ δ' ἀλεύεται· ἀμφὶ δὲ δαιτός
μάρνανθ'· ἱπτάμενον δὲ πέριξ ἀτέλεστα διώκει
σπειρηθεὶς καὶ λοξὸν ὑποδρὰξ ὄμμασι λεύσσων.

Εἴ γε μὲν Ἡφαίστοιο χαλαίποδος ἐν πτυχὶ νήσου
βήσεαι ἠὲ Σάμον δυσχείμερον, αἵ τ' ἐνὶ κόλπῳ
Θρηϊκίῳ βέβληνται ἑκὰς Ῥησκυνθίδος Ἥρης,
Ἕβρος ἵνα Ζωναῖά τ' ὄρη χιόνεσσι φάληρα
καὶ δρύες Οἰαγρίδαο, τόθι Ζηρύνθιον ἄντρον,
δήεις κεγχρίνεω δολιχὸν τέρας, ὅν τε λέοντα
αἰόλον αὐδάξαντο, περίστικτον φολίδεσσι.
τοῦ πάχετος μῆκός τε πολύστροφον. Αἶψα δὲ σαρκί
πυθεδόνας κατέχευε δυσαλθέας, αἱ δ' ἐπὶ γυίοις
ἰοβόροι βόσκονται· ἀεὶ δ' ὑπὸ νηδύσιν ὕδρωψ
ἄλγεσιν ἐμβαρύθουσα κατὰ μέσον ὀμφαλὸν ἵζει.
Ἤτοι ὅτ' ἠελίοιο θερειτάτη ἵσταται ἀκτίς,
οὔρεα μαιμώσσων ἐπινίσεται ὀκριόεντα
αἵματος ἰσχανόων καὶ ἐπὶ κτίλα μῆλα δοκεύων,
ἢ Σάου ἠὲ Μοσύχλου ὅτ' ἀμφ' ἐλάτῃσι μακεδναῖς
ἄγραυλοι ψύχωσι, λελοιπότες ἔργα νομήων.
μὴ σύ γε θαρσαλέος περ ἐὼν θέλε βήμεναι ἄντην
μαινομένου, μὴ δή σε περιπλέξῃ καὶ ἀνάγχῃ
πάντοθι μαστίζων οὐρῇ δέμας, ἐν δὲ καὶ αἷμα
λαιφάξῃ κληῖδας ἀναρρήξας ἑκάτερθεν.
φεῦγε δ' ἀεὶ σκολιήν τε καὶ οὐ μίαν ἀτραπὸν ἴλλων,
δοχμὸς ἀνακρούων θηρὸς πάτον· ἦ γὰρ ὁ δεσμούς
βλάπτεται ἐν καμπῇσι πολυστρέπτοισιν ἀκάνθης,
ἰθεῖαν δ' ὤκιστος ἐπιδρομάδην στίβον ἕρπει.
τοῖος Θρηϊκίῃσιν ὄφις νήσοισι πολάζει.

Ἔνθα καὶ οὐτιδανοῦ περ ἀπεχθέα βρύγματ' ἔασιν
ἀσκαλάβου· τὸν μέν τ' ἐρέει φάτις οὕνεκ' Ἀχαιή
Δημήτηρ ἔβλαψεν ὅθ' ἄψεα σίνατο παιδός
Καλλίχορον παρὰ φρεῖαρ, ὅτ' ἐν Κελεοῖο θεράπναις
ἀρχαίη Μετάνειρα θεὴν δείδεκτο περίφρων.
Ἄλλα γε μὴν ἄβλαπτα κινώπετα βόσκεται ὕλην,
δρυμοὺς καὶ λασιῶνας ἀμορβαίους τε χαράδρας,
οὓς ἔλοπας λίβυάς τε πολυστρεφέας τε μυάγρους
φράζονται, σὺν δ' ὅσσοι ἀκοντίαι ἠδὲ μόλουροι
ἢ ἔτι που τυφλῶπες ἀπήμαντοι φορέονται.

Τῶν μὲν ἐγὼ θρόνα πάντα καὶ ἀλθεστήρια νούσων
φύλλα τε ῥιζοτόμον τε διείσομαι ἀνδράσιν ὥρην,
πάντα διαμπερέως καὶ ἀπηλεγές, οἷσιν ἀρήγων
ἀλθήσῃ νούσοιο κατασπέρχουσαν ἀνίην.

Τὰς μὲν ἔτι βλύοντι φόνῳ περιαλγέι ποίας
δρέψασθαι νεοκμῆτας—ὃ γὰρ προφερέστατον ἄλλων—
χώρῳ ἵνα κνῶπες θαλερὴν βόσκονται ἀν᾽ ὕλην.
Πρώτην μὲν Χείρωνος ἐπαλθέα ῥίζαν ἑλέσθαι,
Κενταύρου Κρονίδαο φερώνυμον, ἥν ποτε Χείρων
Πηλίου ἐν νιφόεντι κιχὼν ἐφράσσατο δειρῇ.
τῆς μὲν ἀμαρακόεσσα χυτὴ περιδέδρομε χαίτη,
ἄνθεα δὲ χρύσεια φαείνεται· ἡ δ᾽ ὑπὲρ αἴης
ῥίζα καὶ οὐ βυθόωσα Πελεθρόνιον νάπος ἴσχει.
ἣν σὺ καὶ αὐαλέην ὁτὲ δ᾽ ἔγχλοον ὅλμῳ ἀράξας,
φυρσάμενος κοτύλῃ πιέειν μενοεικέος οἴνης·
παντὶ γὰρ ἄρκιός ἐστι· τό μιν πανάκειον ἔπουσιν.
Ἤτοι ἀριστολόχεια παλίνσκιος ἐνδατέοιτο,
φύλλ᾽ ἅτε κισσήεντα περικλυμένοιο φέρουσα·
ἄνθεα δ᾽ ὑσγίνῳ ἐνερεύθεται, ἡ δέ οἱ ὀδμὴ
σκίδναται ἐμβαρύθουσα, μέσον δ᾽ ὡς ἀχράδα καρπὸν
μυρτάδος ἐξ ὄχνης ἐπιόψεαι ἢ σύ γε βάκχης·
ῥίζα δὲ θηλυτέρης μὲν ἐπιστρογγύλλεται ὄγκῳ,
ἄρσενι δ᾽ αὖ δολιχή τε καὶ ἂμ πυγόνος βάθος ἴσχει,
πύξου δὲ χροιῇ προσαλίγκιος Ὠρικίοιο.
τὴν ἤτοι ἔχιός τε καὶ αἰνοπλῆγος ἐχίδνης
ἀγρεύσεις ὄφελος περιώσιον· ἔνθεν ἀπορρὼξ
δραχμαίη μίσγοιτο ποτῷ ἔνι κιρράδος οἴνης.
Ναὶ μὴν καὶ τρίσφυλλον ὀπάζεο κνωψὶν ἀρωγὴν
ἠέ που ἐν τρήχοντι πάγῳ ἢ ἀποσφάγι βήσσῃ·
τὴν ἤτοι μινυανθές, ὁ δὲ τριπέτηλον ἐνίσποι,
χαίτην μὲν λωτῷ, ῥυτῇ γε μὲν εἴκελον ὀδμήν.
ἤτοι ὅτ᾽ ἄνθεα πάντα καὶ ἐκ πτίλα ποικίλα χεύῃ,
οἷόν τ᾽ ἀσφάλτου ἀπερεύγεται· ἔνθα κολούσας
σπέρμα τόσον κύμβοιο τραπεζήεντος ἑλέσθαι
καρδόπῳ ἐντρίψας, πιέειν ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγήν.

Νῦν δ᾽ ἄγε τοι ἐπίμικτα νόσων ἀλκτήρια λέξω.
Θρινακίην μὲν ῥίζαν ἕλευ γυιαλθέα θάψου
σμώξας, ἐν δὲ σπέρμα χυτὸν λευκανθέος ἄγνου,
νῆριν πηγάνιόν τε περιβρυές, ἐν δέ τε θύμβρης
δρεψάμενος βλαστὸν χαμαιευνάδος, ἥ τε καθ᾽ ὕλην
οἴας θ᾽ ἑρπύλλοιο περὶ ῥάδικας ἀέξει.
ἄγρει δ᾽ ἀσφοδέλοιο διανθέος ἄλλοτε ῥίζαν,
ἄλλοτε καὶ καυλεῖον ὑπέρτερον ἀνθερίκοιο,

πολλάκι δ’ αὖ καὶ σπέρμα τό τε λοβὸς ἀμφὶς ἀέξει,
ἠὲ καὶ ἑλξίνην, τήν τε κλύβατιν καλέουσιν,
ὕδασι τερπομένην καὶ ἀεὶ θάλλουσαν ἰάμνοις·
πῖνε δ’ ἐνιτρίψας κοτυλήρυτον ὄξος ἀφύσσων
ἢ οἴνης· ῥέα δ’ αὖτε καὶ ὕδατι κῆρας ἀλύξεις.
Ἐσθλὴν δ’ Ἀλκιβίου ἔχιος περιφράζεο ῥίζαν.
τῆς καὶ ἀκανθοβόλος μὲν ἀεὶ περιτέτροφε χαίτη,
λείρια δ’ ὡς ἴα τοῖα περιστέφει· ἡ δὲ βαθεῖα
καὶ ῥαδινὴ ὑπένερθεν ἀέξεται οὔδεϊ ῥίζα.
τὸν μὲν ἔχις βουβῶνος ὕπερ νεάτοιο χαράξας
ἄντλῳ ἐνυπνώοντα χυτῆς παρὰ τέλσον ἅλωος
εἶθαρ ἀνέπνευσεν καμάτου βίῃ· αὐτὰρ ὁ γαίης
ῥίζαν ἐρυσσάμενος τὸ μὲν ἕρκεϊ θρύψεν ὀδόντων
θηλάζων, τὸ δὲ πέσκος ἑῷ περὶ κάββαλεν ἕλκει.
Ἦ μὴν καὶ πρασίοιο χλοανθέος ἔρνος ὀλόψας
χραισμήσεις ὀφίεσσι πιὼν ἀργῆτι μετ’ οἴνῳ,
ἥ τε καὶ ἀστόργοιο κατείρυσεν οὔθατα μόσχου
πρωτογόνου, στέργει δὲ περισφαραγεῦσα γάλακτι·
τὴν ἤτοι μελίφυλλον ἐπικλείουσι βοτῆρες,
οἱ δὲ μελίκταιναν· τῆς γὰρ περὶ φύλλα μέλισσαι
ὀδμῇ θελγόμεναι μέλιτος ῥοιζηδὸν ἵενται.
Ἠὲ σύ γ’ ἐγκεφάλοιο περὶ σμήνιγγας ἀραιάς
ὄρνιθος λέψαιο κατοικάδος· ἄλλοτ’ ἀμόρξαις
ψηχρὰ πολύκνημον καὶ ὀρίγανον, ἢ ἀπὸ κάπρου
ἤπατος ἀκρότατον κέρσαι λοβόν, ὅς τε τραπέζης
ἐκφύεται, νεύει δὲ χολῆς σχεδὸν ἠδὲ πυλάων.
καὶ τὰ μὲν ἂρ σύμμικτα πιεῖν ἢ ἀπ’ ἄνδιχα κόψας
ὄξεος ἢ οἴνης· πλεῖον δ’ ἄκος ἕψεται οἴνῃ.
Ἐν δὲ φόβην ἐρύσασθαι ἀειθαλέος κυπαρίσσου
ἐς ποτόν, ἢ πάνακες, ἢ κάστορος οὐλοὸν ὄρχιν,
ἢ ἵππου τὸν Νεῖλος ὑπὲρ Σάιν αἰθαλόεσσαν
βόσκει, ἀρούρῃσιν δὲ κακὴν ἐπιβάλλεται ἅρπην,
ὅς τε καὶ ἐκ ποταμοῖο λιπὼν ζάλον εἰλυόεντα,
χιλοὶ ὅτε χλοάουσι, νέον δ’ ἀπεχεύατο ποίην,
τόσσον ἐπιστείβων λείπει βυθὸν ὁσσάτιόν περ
ἐκνέμεται γενύεσσι παλίσσυτον ὄγμον ἐλαύνων.
τοῦ μὲν ἀποπροταμὼν δραχμῆς βάρος ἰσοφαρίζειν,
ὕδατι δ’ ἐμπίσαιο κύτει ἐν αολλέα κόψας.
Μηδὲ σύ γ’ ἀβροτόνου ἐπιλήθεο, μηδέ τι δάφνης
καρπὸν ἀραιοτέρης· μάλα δ’ ἂν καὶ ἀμάρακος εἴη

χραισμήεις πρασιῆς τε καὶ ἀνδήροισι χλοάζων·
ἐν δὲ τίθει τάμισον σκίνακος νεαροῖο λαγωοῦ
ἢ προκὸς ἠὲ νεβροῖο πάροιθ' ἀπὸ λύματα κόψας,
ἢ ἐλάφου νηδύν, τὸ μὲν ἄρ καλέουσιν ἐχῖνον,
ἄλλοι δ' ἐγκατόεντα κεκρύφαλον· ὧν ἀπερύσσας
δραχμάων ὅσσον τε δύω καταβάλλεο μοίρας
τέτρασιν ἐν κυάθοις μέθυος πολιοῦ ἐπιμίξας.
    Μηδὲ σέ γε χραίσμη πολίου λάθοι ἠὲ κέδροιο,
ἀρκευθός σφαῖραί τε θερειλεχέος πλατάνοιο,
σπέρματα βουπλεύρου τε καὶ Ἰδαίης κυπαρίσσου·
ἠὲ καὶ ἐξ ἐλάφοιο ταμεῖν πηρῖνα θοραίην.
πάντα γὰρ ἀλθήσει καὶ ἀθέσφατον ἐκ μόγον ὤσει.
    Τὴν δὲ μετ' ἐξετέρην θανάτου φύξιν τε καὶ ἀλκήν
φράζεο κουλυβάτειαν ἑλών· τροχαλῷ δ' ἐνὶ λίγδῳ
σώχειν, ἐν δέ τέ οἱ κοτύλην πτισάνοιο χέασθαι,
ἐν δὲ δύω κυάθεια παλαισταγέος οἴνοιο,
ἐν δὲ καὶ ἀργέσταο λίπευς ἰσόμοιρον ἐλαίου·
φύρσας δὲ πληγῇσι χολοιβόρον ἰὸν ἐρύξεις.
    Ἄγρει δ' ἐξάμορον κοτύλης εὐώδεα πίσσαν
καὶ χλοεροῦ νάρθηκος ἀπὸ μέσον ἦτρον ὀλόψας,
ἠὲ καὶ ἱππείου μαράθου πολυαυξέα ῥίζαν
κεδρίσιν ἐντρίψας, ἐλεοθρέπτου τε σελίνου
σπέρματα· μεστωθὲν δὲ χάδοι βάθος ὀξυβάφοιο·
ἔνθα καὶ ἱππείου προταμὼν σπερμεῖα σελίνου,
δραχμάων δὲ δύω σμύρνης ἐχεπευκέος ἄχθη,
ἐν δὲ θερειγενέος καρπὸν κέρσαιο κυμίνου
στήσας ἠὲ χύδην τε καὶ ἄστατον ἀμφικυκήσας·
πῖνε δὲ μιξάμενος κυάθῳ τρὶς ἀφύξιμον οἴνην.
    Νάρδου δ' εὐστάχυος δραχμήϊον ἄχθος ἑλέσθαι,
σὺν δὲ καὶ ὀκταπόδην ποταμοῦ ἄπο συληθέντα
καρκίνον ἐνθρύψαιο νεοβδάλτοιο γάλακτος,
ἶρίν θ', ἣν ἔθρεψε Δρίλων καὶ Νάρονος ὄχθαι,
Σιδονίου Κάδμοιο θεμείλιον Ἁρμονίης τε
ἔνθα δύω δασπλῆτε νομὸν στείβουσι δράκοντε.
λάζεο δ' ἀνθεμόεσσαν ἄφαρ τανύφυλλον ἐρείκην,
ἥν τε μελισσαῖος περιβόσκεται οὐλαμὸς ἕρπων·
καὶ μυρίκης λάζοιο νέον πανακαρπέα θάμνον,
μάντιν ἐνὶ ζωοῖσι γεράσμιον, ᾗ ἐν Ἀπόλλων
μαντοσύνας Κοροπαῖος ἐθήκατο καὶ θέμιν ἀνδρῶν·
μὶξ δὲ κονυζῆεν φυτὸν ἔγχλοον ἠδὲ καὶ ἀκτῆς

καυλοὺς ἠνεμόεντας, ἰδὲ πτερὰ πολλὰ καὶ ἄνθη
σαμψύχου κύτισόν τε καὶ εὐγλαγέας τιθυμάλλους.
πάντα δὲ λίγδῳ θρύπτε, καὶ ἐν σκαφίδεσσι δοχαίαις
φαρμάσσων μέθυ πῖνε χοὸς δεκάτῃ ἐνὶ μοίρῃ.
Ἀλλ᾽ ἤτοι γερύνων καναχοὶ περίαλλα τοκῆες
βάτραχοι ἐν χύτρῃσι καθεψηθέντες ἄριστοι
βάμματι· πολλάκι δ᾽ ἧπαρ ἐνὶ σχεδίῃ ποθὲν οἴνῃ,
ἢ αὐτοῦ σίνταο κάρη κακὸν, ἄλλοτε νύμφαις
ἐμπισθέν, τοτὲ δ᾽ οἴνου ἐνὶ σταγόνεσσιν ἀρήξει.
Μὴ σύ γ᾽ ἑλιχρύσοιο λιπεῖν πολυδευκέος ἄνθην,
κόρκορον ἢ μύωπα, πανάκτειόν τε κονίλην,
ἥν τε καὶ Ἡράκλειον ὀρίγανον ἀμφὶς ἔπουσι·
σὺν καὶ ὄνου πετάλειον ὀριγάνῳ αὖά τε θύμβρης
στρομβεῖα ψώχεσθε, κακῆς ἐμφόρβια νούσου.
Ἄγρει μὰν ὀλίγαις μηκωνίσι ῥάμνον εἴσην
ἑρσομένην· ἀργῆτι δ᾽ ἀεὶ περιδέδρομεν ἄνθῃ·
τὴν ἤτοι φιλέταιριν ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν
ἀνέρες οἳ Τμώλοιο παραὶ Γύγαό τε σῆμα
Παρθένιον ναίουσι λέπας, τόθι Κίλβιν ἀεργοί
ἵπποι χιλεύουσι καὶ ἀντολαί εἰσι Καΰστρου.
Νῦν δ᾽ ἄγε τοι ῥίζας ἐρέω ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγούς.
ἔνθα δύω ἐχίεια πιφαύσκεο· τῆς δὲ τὸ μέν που
ἀγχούσῃ προσέοικεν ἀκανθῆεν πετάλειον,
παῦρον ἐπεί, τυτθὸν δὲ καὶ ἐν χθονὶ πυθμένα τείνει.
ἡ δ᾽ ἑτέρη πετάλῳ τε καὶ ἐν καύλοισι θάλεια,
ὑψηλή· ὀλίγῳ δὲ πέριξ καλχαίνεται ἄνθει,
βλάστη δ᾽ ὡς ἔχιος σφεδανὸν δ᾽ ἐφύπερθε κάρηαρ·
τῶν μὲν ἀπ᾽ ἀνδρακάδα προταμὼν ἰσήρεα χραισμεῖν,
ἢ σφέλᾳ ἢ ὅλμῳ κεάσας ἢ ῥωγάδι πέτρῃ.
Καί τε σύ γ᾽ ἠρύγγοιο καὶ ἀνθήεντος ἀκάνθου
ῥίζεα λειήναιο, φέροις δ᾽ ἰσορρεπὲς ἄχθος
ἀμφοῖν κλώθοντος ἐν ἀρπέζῃσιν ἐρίνου·
λάζεο δ᾽ εὐκνήμοιο κόμην βρίθουσαν ὀρείου
καὶ σπέραδος Νεμεαῖον ἀειφύλλοιο σελίνου,
σὺν δὲ καὶ ἀννήσοιο τὸ διξόον ἄχθος ἀείραι
ῥίζαις ὁλκήεσσαν ὑπὸ πλάστιγγα πεσοῦσαν·
καὶ τὰ μὲν ὀργάζοιο, καὶ εἰν ἑνὶ τεύχεϊ μίξας
ἄλλοτε μέν τ᾽ ἐχίων ὀλοὸν σίνος, ἄλλοτε τύμμα
σκορπιόεν, τοτὲ δάχματ᾽ ἐπαλθήσαιο φάλαγγος,
τριπλόον ἐνθρύπτων ὀδελοῦ βάρος ἔνδοθεν οἴνης.

Φράζεο δ᾽ αἰγλήεντα χαμαίλεον ἠδὲ καὶ ὀρφνόν·
δοιοὶ δ᾽ ἀμφὶς ἔασιν· ὁ μὲν ζοφοείδελος ὠπήν
ἤϊκται σκολύμῳ, τροχεὴν δ᾽ ἀπεχεύατο χαίτην·
ῥίζα δέ οἱ βριαρή τε καὶ αἴθαλος, ἠδ᾽ ὑπὸ κνημοῖς
σκοιοῖς ἐντελέθει φυξήλιος ἢ νεμέεσσι.
τὸν δ᾽ ἕτερον δήεις αἰεὶ πετάλοισιν ἀγαυρόν,
μέσσῃ δ᾽ ἐν κεφαλῇ δύεται πεδόεσσα μολοβρή,
ῥίζα δ᾽ ὑπαργήεσσα μελίζωρος δὲ πάσασθαι.
τῶν δὴ κυανέην μὲν ἀναίνεο, τῆς δ᾽ ἀπὸ φάρσος
δραχμαῖον ποταμοῖο πιεῖν ὑδάτεσσι ταράξας.
Ἄλλην δ᾽ Ἀλκιβίοιο φερώνυμον ἄγρεο ποίην,
δράχμα χερὸς πλήσας, παύρῳ δ᾽ ἐν νέκταρι πίνειν.
τὴν μὲν ὑπὸ σκοπέλοισι Φαλακραίοισιν ἐπακτήρ,
Κρύμνης ἂμ πεδίον καὶ ἀνὰ Γράσον ἠδ᾽ ἵνα θ᾽ Ἵππου
λειμῶνες, σκυλάκεσσιν Ἀμυκλαίῃσι κελεύων,
κνυζηθμῷ κυνὸς οὔλῳ ἐπήϊσε θυμολέοντος,
ὅς τε μεταλλεύων αἰγὸς ῥόθον ἐν στίβῳ ὕλης
κανθῷ ἐνὶ ῥαντῆρι τυπὴν ἀνεδέξατ᾽ ἐχίδνης·
καὶ τὴν μὲν κλάγξας ἀφ᾽ ἑκὰς βάλε, ῥεῖα δὲ ποίης
φύλλα κατέβρυξεν, καὶ ἀλεύατο φοινὸν ὄλεθρον.
Ἆσαι δ᾽ ἔγχλοα φλοιὸν ἐλαιήεντα κρότωνος
συμμίγδην πετάλοισι μελισσοφύτοιο δασείης,
ἠὲ καὶ ἠελίοιο τροπαῖς ἰσώνυμον ἔρνος
ἥ θ᾽ Ὑπεριονίδαο παλινστρέπτοιο κελεύθους
τεκμαίρει γλαυκοῖσιν ἴσον πετάλοισιν ἐλαίης.
αὔτως δὲ ῥίζαν κοτυληδόνος, ἥ τ᾽ ἀνὰ κρυμόν
ῥηγνυμένων ὀλοφυδνὰ διήφυσε ποσσὶ χίμετλα.
δήποτε δ᾽ ἢ βλωθροῖο πυρίτιδος ἔγχλοα φύλλα,
ἢ σκολοπενδρείοιο φέρειν ἀπὸ καυλὸν ἀμήσας.
ἄγρει καὶ πάνακες Φλεγυήϊον, ὅρρα τε πρῶτος
Παιήων Μέλανος ποταμοῦ παρὰ χεῖλος ἄμερξεν,
Ἀμφιτρυωνιάδαο θέρων Ἰφικλέος ἕλκος,
εὖτε σὺν Ἡρακλῆϊ κακὴν ἐπυράκτεεν Ὕδρην.
Εἰ δέ, σύ γε σκύλακας γαλέης ἢ μητέρα λαιδρήν
ἀγρεύσαις πρόσπαιον, ἀποσκύλαιο δὲ λάχνην
καρχαλέου καθύπερθε πυρὸς σελάοντος ἀϋτμῆς,
τῆς δ᾽ ἐξ ἔγκατα πάντα βαλὼν καὶ ἀφόρδια γαστρός
φύρσον ἁλὸς δίοιο καὶ ἠελίου δίχα τέρσαι
μή τοι ἐνισκήλῃ νεαρὸν σκίναρ ὠκὺς ἀΐξας.
ἀλλ᾽ ὁπόταν χρειώ σε κατεμπάζῃ μογέοντα,

σῶχε διὰ κνῆστι σκελετὸν δάκος, οἷά τ᾽ ἀφαυρόν
σίλφιον ἢ στροφάλιγγα περιξήροιο γάλακτος
οἴνῳ ἐπικνήθων· τὸ δέ τοι προφερέστατον ἄλκαρ
ἐσσεῖται, πάσας γὰρ ὁμῶς ἀπὸ κῆρας ἐρύξει.
Πεύθεο δ᾽ εἰναλίης χέλυος κρατέουσαν ἀρωγήν
δάχματος εἶαρ ἔμεν δολιχῶν ὅσα φῶτας ἀνιγρούς
ἑρπετὰ σίνονται· τὸ δέ τοι μέγ᾽ ἀλέξιον εἴη.
ἤτοι ὅταν βροτολοιγὸν ὑπὲκ πόντοιο χελύνην
αἰγιαλῶν ἐρύσωσιν ἐπὶ ξερὸν ἀσπαλιῆες,
τήνδ᾽ ἀνακυπώσας κεφαλῆς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ἀράξαι
μαύλιδι χαλκείῃ, βλοσυρὸν δ᾽ ἐξ αἷμα χέασθαι
ἐν κεράμῳ νεοκμῆτι καμινόθεν, ἐκ δὲ πελιδνόν
οὐρὸν ἀπηθῆσαι πλαδάον εὐεργέϊ μάκτρῃ·
ἧς ἔπι δὴ τέρσαιο διατρυφὲς αἷμα κεδάσσας
δραχμάων πισύρων μίσγων βάρος· ἐν δὲ κυμίνου
δοιὰς ἀγροτέροιο, καὶ ἐκ ταμίσοιο λαγωοῦ
τετράμορον δραχμῇσι δύω καταβάλλεο βρῖθος·
ἔνθεν ἀποτμήγων πιέειν δραχμαῖον ἐν οἴνῃ.
Καὶ τάδε μέν τ᾽ ὀφίεσσιν ἀλεξητήρια δήεις.

Ἔργα δέ τοι σίνταο περιφράζοιο φάλαγγος
σήματά τ᾽ ἐν βρυχμοῖσιν· ἐπεί ῥ᾽ ὁ μὲν αἰθαλόεις ῥώξ
κέκληται πισσῆεν, ἐπασσυτέροις ποσὶν ἕρπων,
γαστέρι δ᾽ ἐν μεσάτῃ ὀλοοῖς ἔσκληκεν ὀδοῦσι.
τοῦ δὲ καὶ ἐγχρίμψαντος ἀνουτήτῳ ἴκελος χρώς
μίμνει ὅμως, τὰ δ᾽ ὕπερθε φάη ὑποφοινίσσονται,
φρίκη δ᾽ ἐν ῥέθεϊ σκηρίπτεται· αὐτίκα δὲ χρώς
μέζεά τ᾽ ἀνδρὸς ὕπερθε τιταίνεται, ἐν δέ τε καυλός
φύρματι μυδαλέος προϊάπτεται, ἰσχία δ᾽ αὔτως
μάλκη ἐνισκήπτουσα κατήριπεν ἔχματα γούνων.
Ἀστέριον δέ φιν ἄλλο πιφαύσκεο, τοῦ δ᾽ ἐπὶ νώτῳ
λεγνωταὶ στίλβουσι διαυγέες ἐν χροῒ ῥάβδοι·
βρύξαντος δ᾽ ἀΐδηλος ἐπέδραμεν ἀνέρι φρίκη,
ἐν δὲ κάρος κεφαλῇ, γούνων δ᾽ ὑποέκλασε δεσμά.
Κυάνεον δέ τοι ἄλλο πεδήορον ἀμφὶς ἀΐσσει
λαχνῆεν· δεινὸν δὲ φέρει καὶ ἐπὶ χροῒ νύχμα
ὅντινα γυιώσῃ· κραδίῃ δέ οἱ ἐν βάρος ἵζει,
νὺξ δὲ περὶ κροτάφοις, ἔμετον δ᾽ ἐξήρυγε δειρῆς
λοιγὸν ἀραχνήεντα· νέμει δέ οἱ ἐγγὺς ὄλεθρον.
Ἀγρώστης γε μὲν ἄλλος, ὃ δὴ λύκου εἴσατο μορφῇ

μυιάων ὀλετῆρος· ὀπιπεύει δὲ μελίσσας,
ψῆνας μύωπάς τε καὶ ὅσσ’ ἐπὶ δεσμὸν ἵκηται.
ἄκμητον δ’ ἐπὶ τύμμα φέρει μεταμώνιον ἀνδρί.
Ἄλλο γε μὴν δύσδηρι, τὸ δὴ σφήκειον ἔπουσι,
πυρσὸν ἅλις, σφηκὶ προσαλίγκιον ὠμοβορῆϊ,
ὃς δὴ θαρσαλέην γενεὴν ἐκμάσσεται ἵππου·
ἵπποι γὰρ σφηκῶν γένεσις, ταῦροι δὲ μελισσῶν
σκήνεσι πυθομένοισι λυκοσπάδες ἐξεγένοντο.
τοῦ δὲ καὶ οὐτήσαντος ἐπὶ κρατερὸν θέει οἶδος
νοῦσοί τ’ ἐξέτεραι· μετὰ γούνασι δ’ ἄλλοτε παλμός,
ἄλλοτε δ’ ἀδρανίη· μινύθοντα δὲ τόνδε δαμάζει
ἐσχάτιον κακοεργὸς ἄγων παυστήριον ὕπνος.
Εἰ δ’ ἄγε μυρμήκειον, ὃ δὴ μύρμηξιν ἔϊκται,
δειρῇ μὲν πυρόεν, ἅζῃ γε μὲν εἴσατο μορφήν,
πάντοθεν ἀστερόεντι περιστιγὲς εὐρέι νώτῳ·
αἰθαλέῃ δ’ ἐπὶ τυτθὸν ἀείρεται αὐχένι κόρσῃ·
ἄλγεα δὲ προτέροισιν ἴσα κνώπεσσι πελάζει.
Χειροδρόποι δ’ ἵνα φῶτες ἄτερ δρεπάνοιο λέγονται
ὄσπρια χέδροπά τ’ ἄλλα μεσοχλόου ἐντὸς ἀρούρης,
ἐνθά δ’ ἐπασσύτερα φλογερῇ εἰλυμένα χροιῇ
εἴκελα κανθαρίδεσσι φαλάγγια τυτθὰ δίενται.
τοῦ μὲν ὅμως ἔμμοχθον ἀεὶ περὶ δάχμα χέονται
φλύκταιναι, κραδίη δὲ παραπλάζουσα μέμηνε,
γλῶσσα δ’ ἄτακτα λέληκε, παρέστραπται δὲ καὶ ὄσσε.
Φράζεο δ’ Αἰγύπτοιο τά τε τρέφει οὐλοὸς αἶα
κνώδαλα, φαλλαίνῃ ἐναλίγκια, τὴν περὶ λύχνους
ἀκρόνυχος δειπνηστὸς ἐπήλασε παιφάσσουσαν·
στεγνὰ δέ οἱ πτερὰ πάντα καὶ ἔγχνοα, τοῖα κονίης
ἢ καὶ ἀπὸ σπληδοῖο φαείνεται, ὅστις ἐπαύρῃ.
τῷ ἴκελος Περσῆος ὑποτρέφεται πετάλοισι,
τοῦ καὶ σμερδαλέον νεύει κάρη αἰὲν ὑποδράξ
ἐσκληκός, νηδὺς δὲ βαρύνεται· αὐτὰρ ὁ κέντρον
αὐχένι τ’ ἀκροτάτῳ κεφαλῇ τ’ ἐνεμάξατο φωτός,
ῥεῖα δέ κεν θανάτοιο καὶ αὐτίκα μοῖραν ἐφείη.

Εἰ δ’ ἄγε καὶ κέντρῳ κεκορυθμένον ἀλγινόεντι
σκορπίον αὐδήσω καὶ ἀεικέα τοῖο γενέθλην.
Τῶν ἤτοι λευκὸς μὲν ἀκήριος οὐδ’ ἐπιλωβής,
πυρσὸς δ’ αὖ γενύεσσι θοὸν προσεμάξατο καῦσον
ἀνδράσιν αἰθαλόεντα· περισπαίρουσι δὲ λώβαις

οἷα πυρίβλητοι, κρατερὸν δ᾽ ἐπὶ δίψος ὄρωρεν.
Αὐτὰρ ὅ γε ζοφόεις ἄραδον κακὸν ὤπασε τύψας
ἀνδρί· παραπλῆγες δὲ καὶ ἄφραστον γελόωσιν.
ἄλλος δὲ χλοάων γε, καὶ ὁππότε γυῖον ἀράξῃ
φρῖκας ἐπιπροΐησι, κακὴ δ᾽ ἐπὶ τοῖσι χάλαζα
εἴδεται ἐμπλάζουσα καὶ ἢν μέγα Σείριος ἄζῃ·
τοίη οἱ κέντροιο κοπίς, τοιῷ δ᾽ ἐπὶ κέντρῳ
σφόνδυλοι ἐννεάδεσμοι ὑπερτείνουσι κεραίης.
Ἄλλος δ᾽ ἐμπέλιος· φορέει δ᾽ ὑπὸ βοσκάδα νηδύν
εὐρεῖαν, δὴ γάρ τε ποηφάγος, αἰὲν ἄητος,
γαιοφάγος—βουβῶσι τυπὴν ἀλίαστον ἰάπτει—·
τοίη οἱ βούβρωστις ἐνέσκληκεν γενύεσσι.
Τὸν δ᾽ ἕτερον δήεις ἐναλίγκιον αἰγιαλῆϊ
καρκίνῳ ὃς μνία λεπτὰ ῥόθον τ᾽ ἐπιβόσκεται ἅλμης.
ἄλλοι δὲ ῥοικοῖσιν ἰσήρεες ἄντα παγούροις
γυῖα βαρύνονται· βαρέαι δ᾽ ἐσκλήκασι χηλαί,
οἷαι τε πετραίοισιν ἐποκριόωσι παγούροις.
τῶν δὴ καὶ γενεὴν ἐξέμμορον εὖτε λίπωσι
πέτρας καὶ βρύα λεπτὰ πολυστίοιο θαλάσσης.
τοὺς ἁλὸς ἐξερύουσι δελαστρέες ἰχθυβολῆες,
αὐτίκα δ᾽ ἀγρευθέντες ἐνὶ γρώνῃσιν ἔδυσαν
μυοδόκοις, ἵνα τέκνα κακοφθόρα τῶνδε θανόντων
σκορπίοι ἐξεγένοντο καθ᾽ ἕρκεα λωβητῆρες.
Τὸν δὲ μελίχλωρον· τοῦ μὲν προμελαίνεται ἄκρη
σφόνδυλος, ἄσβεστον δὲ νέμει πολυκήριον ἄτην.
Ἔχθιστος δ᾽ ὅ γε ῥαιβὰ φέρει φλογὶ εἴκελα γυῖα
ἀνδράσι, νηπιάχοις δὲ παρασχεδὸν ἤγαγεν αἶσαν·
οἷς δὴ καὶ νώτοισι περὶ πτερὰ λευκὰ χέονται
μάστακι σιτοφάγῳ ἐναλίγκια, τοί θ᾽ ὑπὲρ ἄκρων
ἱπτάμενοι ἀθέρων λεπυρὸν στάχυν ἐκβόσκονται
Πήδασα καὶ Κισσοῖο κατὰ πτύχας ἐμβατέουσιν.

Οἶδά γε μὴν φράσσασθαι ἀλέξια τοῖο βολάων,
οἷά περ ἐκ βέμβικος ὀρεστέρου ἠὲ μελίσσης,
ἥ τε καὶ ἐκ κέντρου θάνατος πέλει εὖτε χαράξῃ
ἄνδρα πέριξ σίμβλοιο πονεύμενον ἢ καχίλοισι·
κέντρον γὰρ πληγῇ περικάλλιπεν ἐμματέουσα,
κέντρον δὲ ζωήν τε φέρει θάνατόν τε μελίσσαις.
Οἶδά γε μὴν καὶ ἴουλος ἃ μήδεται ἠδ᾽ ὀλοὸς σφήξ,
πεμφρηδὼν ὀλίγη τε καὶ ἀμφικαρὴς σκολόπενδρα,

ἥ τε καὶ ἀμφοτέρωθεν ὀπάζεται ἀνδράσι κῆρα,
νήϊά θ' ὡς σπέρχονται ὑπὸ πτερὰ θηρὶ κιούσῃ·
τυφλήν τε σμερδνήν τε βροτοῖς ἐπὶ λοιγὸν ἄγουσαν
μυγαλέην, τροχιῇσιν ἐνιθνῄσκουσαν ἁμάξης.
σῆπά γε μὴν πεδανοῖσιν ὁμὴν σαύροισιν ἀλύξαις,
καὶ σαλαμάνδρειον δόλιον δάκος αἰὲν ἀπεχθές,
ἥ τε καὶ ἀσβέστοιο διὲκ πυρὸς οἶμον ἔχουσα
ἔσσυται ἄκμηνος καὶ ἀνώδυνος· οὐδέ τί οἱ φλόξ
σίνεται ἀσβέστη ῥαγόεν δέρος ἄκρα τε γυίων.
Ναὶ μὴν οἶδ' ὅσα πόντος ἁλὸς ῥόχθοισιν ἑλίσσει,
σμυραίνην δ' ἔκπαγλον· ἐπεὶ μογεροὺς ἁλιῆας
πολλάκις ἐμπρήσασα κατεπρήνιξεν ἐπάκτρου
εἰς ἅλα φυζηθέντας ἐχετλίου ἐξαναδῦσα.
εἰ ἔτυμον κείνην γε σὺν οὐλοβόροις ἐχίεσσι
θόρνυσθαι, προλιποῦσαν ἁλὸς νομόν, ἠπείροισι.
Τρυγόνα μὴν ὀλοεργὸν ἁλιρραίστην τε δράκοντα
οἶδ' ἀπαλέξασθαι· φορέει γε μὲν ἄλγεα τρυγών
ἦμος ἐν ὁλκαίοισι λίνοις μεμογηότα κέντρῳ
ἐργοπόνον τύψῃσιν, ἢ ἐν πρέμνοισι παγείῃ
δενδρείου τό τε πολλὸν ἀγαυρότατον θαλέθῃσι·
τοῦ μὲν ὑπὸ πληγῇσιν ἅτ' ἠελίοιο δαμέντος
ῥίζαι σὺν δέ τε φυλλὰς ἀποφθίνει, ἀνδρὶ δὲ σάρκες
πυθόμεναι μινύθουσι· λόγος γε μὲν ὥς ποτ' Ὀδυσσεύς
ἔφθιτο λευγαλέοιο τυπεὶς ἁλίου ὑπὸ κέντρου.

Οἷσιν ἐγὼ τὰ ἕκαστα διείσομαι ἄρκια νούσων.
δὴ γὰρ ὅτ' ἀγχούσης θριδακηΐδα λάζεο χαίτην,
ἄλλοτε πενταπέτηλον, ὅτ' ἄνθεα φοινὰ βάτοιο,
ἄρκιον, ὀξαλίδας τε καὶ ὁρμενόεντα λυκαψόν,
κίκαμα τόρδιλόν τε περιβρυές, ἐν δὲ χαμηλὴν
ῥεῖα πίτυν φηγοῦ τε βαθὺν περὶ φλοιὸν ἀράξας,
σὺν δ' ἄρα καυκαλίδας τε καὶ ἐκ σταφυλίνου ἀμήσας
σπέρματα καὶ τρεμίθοιο νέον πολυειδέα καρπόν·
ἢ ἔτι καὶ φοινίσσον ἁλὸς καταβάλλεο φῦκος
ἀχραές τ' ἀδίαντον, ἵν' οὐκ ὄμβροιο ῥαγέντος
λεπταλέη πίπτουσα νοτὶς πετάλοισιν ἐφίζει.
Εἰ δ' ἄγε καὶ σμυρνεῖον ἀειβρυὲς ἢ σύ γε ποίης
λευκάδος ἠρύγγου τε τάμοις ἀθερηΐδα ῥίζαν
ἄμμιγα καχρυφόρῳ λιβανωτίδι· μηδ' ἀπαρίνη
μηδέ τι κουλυβάτεια περιβρίθουσά τε μήκων

θυλακὶς ἢ ἐπιτηλὶς ἐπὶ χραίσμῃσιν ἀπείῃ.
Σὺν δὲ κράδης κυέουσαν ἀποτμήξαιο κορύνην,
ἢ αὐτοὺς κόκκυγας ἐρινάδος, οἵ τε πρὸ ἄλλης
γογγύλοι ἐκφαίνουσιν ἀνοιδείοντες ὀπώρης.
Λάζεο καὶ πυράκανθαν ἰδὲ φλόμου ἀργέος ἄνθην,
ἄμμιγα δ' αἰγίλοπός τε χελιδονίου τε πέτηλα,
δαύκειον ῥίζαν τε βρυωνίδος, ἢ καὶ ἔφηλιν
θηλυτέρης ἐχθρήν τε χροῆς ὠμόρξατο λεύκην.
Ἐν δὲ περιστερόεντα κατασμώξαιο πέτηλα,
ἢ καὶ ἀλεξιάρης πτόρθους ἀπαμέργεο ῥάμνου·
μούνη γὰρ δρήστειρα βροτῶν ἀπὸ κῆρας ἐρύκει.
Ναὶ μὴν παρθενίοιο νεοδρέπτους ὀροδάμνους,
κίχορον ἢ πεταλῖτιν ἀμέργεο, πολλάκι μίλτου
Λημνίδος ἣ πάσῃσι πέλει θελκτήριον ἄτῃς.
Δήποτε καὶ σικύοιο τάμοις ἐμπευκέα ῥίζαν
ἀγροτέρου· νηδὺν δὲ καὶ ἐμβρίθουσαν ἀνίῃς
ἤμυνεν καὶ καρπὸς ἐϋρρήχου παλιούρου
σὺν καὶ ἀκανθοβόλος χαίτη, νεαλεῖς τ' ὀρόβακχοι
σίδης ὑσγινόεντας ἐπημύοντες ὀλόσχους
αὐχενίους ἵνα λεπτὰ πέριξ ἐνερεύθεται ἄνθη·
ἄλλοτε δ' ὕσσωπός τε καὶ ἡ πολύγουνος ὄνωνις,
φύλλα τε Τηλεφίοιο νέον τ' ἐν βότρυσι κλῆμα,
ἀγλῖθες καὶ καρπὸς ὀρειγενέος κορίοιο,
ἢ καὶ λεπτοθρίοιο πολύχνοα φύλλα κονύζης.
Πολλάκι δ' ἢ πέπεριν κόψας νέον ἢ ἀπὸ Μήδων
κάρδαμον ἐμπίσαιο· σὲ δ' ἂν πολυάνθεα γλήχω
τρύχνον τ' ἠδὲ σίνηπυ κακηπελέοντα σαώσαι.
Ἄγρει καὶ πρασιῆς χλοερὸν πράσον, ἄλλοτε δ' αὐτῆς
σπέρμ' ὀλοὸν κνίδης ἥ θ' ἑψίῃ ἔπλετο κούροις·
σὺν καί που νιφόεν σκίλλης κάρη αὖά τε βολβῶν
σπείρεα καὶ καυλεῖον ὁμοκλήτοιο δράκοντος,
ῥάμνου τ' ἀσπαράγους θαμνίτιδος, ἠδ' ὅσα πεῦκαι
ἀγρότεραι στρόμβοισιν ὑπεθρέψαντο ναπαῖαι.
Εἰ δέ, σύ γ' ἐκ ποίης ἀβληχρέος ἔγχλοα ῥίζαν
θηρὸς ἰσαζομένην τμήξαις ἰοειδέϊ κέντρῳ
σκορπίου, ἠὲ σίδας Ψαμαθηΐδας ἅς τε Τρέφεια
Κῶπαί τε λιμναῖον ὑπεθρέψαντο παρ' ὕδωρ,
ἧπερ Σχοινῆός τε ῥόος Κνώποιό τε βάλλει,
ὅσσα θ' ὑπ' Ἰνδὸν χεῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο Χοάσπεω
πιστάκι' ἀκρεμόνεσσιν ἀμυγδαλόεντα πέφανται·

καυκαλίδας, σὺν δ' αἰθὰ βάλοις φιμώδεα μύρτα,
κάρφεά θ' ὁρμίνοιο καὶ ἐκ μαράθου βρυόεντος,
εἰρύσιμόν τε καὶ ἀγροτέρου σπερμεῖ' ἐρεβίνθου
σὺν χλοεροῖς θάμνοισι βαλὼν βαρυώδεα ποίην.
Ναὶ μὴν καὶ σίσυμβρα πέλει μειλίγματα νούσων,
σὺν δὲ μελιλλώτοιο νέον στέφος, ἠδ' ὅσα χαύνης
οἰνάνθης βρύα λευκὰ καταψήχουσι νομῆες,
ὅσσα τε λυχνὶς ἔνερθεν ἐρευθήεις τε θρυαλλίς
καὶ ῥόδον ἠδ' ἴα λεπτὸν ὅσον σπερμεῖον ἀέξει.
Ἢ καὶ πουλύγονον λασίων ὑπάμησον ἰάμνων,
ψίλωθρον καρπόν τε πολυθρήνου ὑακίνθου,
ὃν Φοῖβος θρήνησεν ἐπεί ῥ' ἀεκούσιος ἔκτα
παῖδα βαλὼν προπάροιθεν Ἀμυκλαίου ποταμοῖο,
πρωθήβην Ὑάκινθον, ἐπεὶ σόλος ἔμπεσε κόρσῃ
πέτρου ἀφαλλόμενος νέατον δ' ἤραξε κάλυμμα.
Σὺν δέ τε καὶ τριπέτηλον ὁποῖό τε δάκρυα βάλλοις
τρισσοῖς ὁλκήεσσιν ἰσοζυγέων ὀδελοῖσιν·
ἠὲ σύ γ' ἕρπυλλον κεροειδέα, πολλάκι κρῆθμον,
ἢ ποίην κυπάρισσον ἀμέργεο, σὺν δὲ καὶ αὐτοῖς
ἄννησον Λιβυκάς τε ποτῷ ἐνικνήθεο ῥίζας·
ὧν σὺ τότ' ἀμμίγδην, τοτὲ δ' ἄνδιχα πίνεο θρύψας
ἐν κελέβῃ, κεράσαι δὲ σὺν ὄξεϊ, πολλάκι δ' οἴνῃ
ἢ ὕδατι· χραισμεῖ δὲ καὶ ἐνθρυφθέντα γάλακτι.
Ἢν δέ σ' ὁδοιπλανέοντα καὶ ἐν νεμέεσσιν ἀνύδροις
νύχμα κατασπέρχῃ, βεβαρημένον αὐτίκα ῥίζας
ἢ ποίην ἢ σπέρμα παρ' ἀτραπιτοῖσι χλοάζον
μαστάζειν γενύεσσιν, ἀμελγόμενος ἄπο χυλόν
τύμμασι δ' ἡμίβρωτα βάλοις ἔπι λύματα δαιτός
ὄφρα δύην καὶ κῆρα κατασπέρχουσαν ἀλύξῃς.
Ναὶ μὴν καὶ σικύην χαλκήρεα λοιγέϊ τύψει
προσμάξας ἰόν τε καὶ ἀθρόον αἷμα κενώσεις,
ἠὲ κράδης γλαγόεντα χέας ὀπόν, ἠὲ σίδηρον
καυστειρῆς θαλφθεῖσαν ὑπὸ στέρνοισι καμίνου.
Ἄλλοτε φορβάδος αἰγὸς ἐνίπλειον δέρος οἴνης
χραισμήσει τημοῦτος ἐπὴν σφυρὸν ἢ χέρα κόψῃ.
ἀσκοῦ ἔσω βαρύθοντα μέσου διὰ πῆχυν ἐρείσας
ἢ σφυρόν, ἀσκοδέτῃσι πέριξ βουβῶνας ἑλίξεις
εἰσόκε τοι μένος οἴνου ἀπὸ χροὸς ἄλγος ἐρύξῃ.
Δήποτε καὶ βδέλλας κορέσαις ἐπὶ τύμμασι βόσκων,
ἢ ἀπὸ κρομμυόφι στάζων ὀπόν, ἄλλοτε δ' οἴνης

μίγδην ἐν πυράθοισι χέας τρύγα φυρήσασθαι
ἢ ὄξευς, νεαλεῖ δὲ πάτῳ περὶ τύψιν ἑλίξαις.

Ὄφρα δὲ καὶ πάσῃσιν ἀλεξητήριον ἄταις
τευξάμενος πεπύθοιο, τό τοι μέγα κρήγυον ἔσται
ἦμος ὅτε θρόνα πάντα μιῇ ὑπὸ χειρὶ ταράξῃς,
ἐν μὲν ἀριστολόχεια καὶ ἴριδος ἐν δέ τε νάρδου
ῥίζαι χαλβανίδες τε σὺν αὐαλέοισι πυρέθροις
εἶεν, δαυκείου τε παναλθέος, ἐν δὲ βρυώνης,
σὺν δέ τε ῥίζεα χαῦνα νεωρυχέος γλυκυσίδης
κάρφεά τ᾽ ἐλλεβόρου μελανόχροος, ἄμμιγα δ᾽ ἀφρός
λίτρου· σὺν δὲ κύμινα χέαις βλαστόν τε κονύζης,
ἄμμιγα δ᾽ ἀγροτέρης σταφίδος λέπος· ἶσα δὲ δάφνης
σπερμεῖα κύτισόν τε κατακνήθειν τε χαμηλήν
ἱππεῖον λειχῆνα, καὶ ἐν κυκλάμινον ἀγείρας.
ἐν καὶ μήκωνος φιαρῆς ὀπόν, ἀμφὶ καὶ ἄγνου
σπέρματα βάλσαμόν τε καὶ ἐν κινάμοιο βαλέσθαι,
σὺν καὶ σφονδύλειον ἁλός τ᾽ ἐμπληθέα κύμβην,
ἄμμιγα καὶ τάμισον καὶ καρκίνον· ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν εἴη
πτωκός, ὁ δ᾽ ἐν ποταμοῖσι πολυστίοισι νομάζων.
καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐν στύπεϊ προβαλὼν πολυχανδέος ὅλμου
μάξαι λαϊνέοισιν ἐπιπλήσσων ὑπέροισιν·
αἶψα δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ αὐαλέοισι χέας ἀπαρινέα χυλόν
ἄμμιγα συμφύρσαιο, καταρτίζοιο δὲ κύκλους
δραχμαίους πλάστιγγι διακριδὸν ἄχθος ἐρύξας,
οἴνης δ᾽ ἐν δοιῇσι χαδεῖν κοτύλῃσι ταράξας.

Καί κεν Ὁμηρείοιο καὶ εἰσέτι Νικάνδροιο
μνῆστιν ἔχοις, τὸν ἔθρεψε Κλάρου νιφόεσσα πολίχνη.

# Commentary

## Title

Whether or not *Theriaca* (Θηριακά) is the original title as given by the poet himself cannot be decided with any certainty. According to Bühler (1960, 45–46) it is likely that Hellenistic poets titled their poems themselves, especially since many of them were engaged in philology. This may have been the case with Nic., of whom we know that he wrote a work entitled Γλῶσσαι (cf. Schneider 1856, 203 ff.; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 218–219), and a treatise entitled Περὶ τῶν ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ποιητῶν (Schneider 1856, 27–28; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 202), although the latter probably dealt with biography and/or literary criticism rather than textual or editorial work. Anyway, there is no self-evident relation between being involved in textual work and adding one's own titles.

The title either seems to be elliptic for θηριακὰ φάρμακα (as LSJ seems to understand it), which produces the translation 'drugs concerning beasts' (cf. ἰατρικά sc. φάρμακα, Hp. *Ep.* 16), or simply seems to mean 'matters concerning venomous beasts', which is more consistent with the broader subject of lines 1–2 of the *Theriaca*. Such use of the -ικός suffix fits similar elliptic titles such as Ἁλιευτικά (*SH* 237, 709), Ἀστρικά (*SH* 87) and Ἀργοναυτικά; cf. Fränkel (1968, 34), who explains Apollonius' title as "*die*, oder *einige*, Erlebnisse der Argonauten". However, against this interpretation, i.e. θηριακὰ φάρμακα, speaks Galen, who does not use the neut. plur. when referring to the antidote, but the fem. sg. θηριακή (sc. ἀντίδοτος); e.g. Gal. *De theriaca ad Pisonem* 14.78. For Nic.'s poem the interpretation 'antidotes against poisonous animals' follows from the information provided throughout the poem, but cannot be derived *a priori* from the title itself, unless Θηριακόν had become more or less an outlined sub-genre, possibly initiated by Numenius, who wrote a Θηριακόν ca. 300 BCE (*SH* 589). Dioscorides (4.99.1) refers to a specific *plant* as being a θηριακόν.

An alternative elliptic use of the adj. plur. neut. applies to titles based on regional designations such as *Messeniaca* (cf. Μεσσηνιακὰ ἔπη, known to be the title of a play of Aeschylus Alexandrinus, *SH* 13) and *Cypria*, which is, according to West (2003a, 66), "agreeing with *poiemata* or *epea*".[1]

1 The collection on the 'New Posidippus'-papyrus confirms that such elliptic titles were common to categorize poetry, e.g. ἱππικά, ναυαγικά or οἰωνοσκοπικά, to which ἐπιγράμματα can be supplied; see Austin & Bastianini 2002, 21. The category of ἰαματακά seems close to Nic.'s, but is likely to be based on a different kind of ellipsis. Netz (2009, 190–191), however, argues that

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## 1–20 Proem

The actual treatment of the subject matter of the *Theriaca*—the account of snakes and measures against their attacks—starts in 21. The first twenty lines can be divided into two separate parts: a proper proem (1–7), and a mythological transition (8–20). The proper proem consists of (i) the introduction of the subject, (ii) the address to the pupil, clarifying the relationship between the speaker (i.e. the persona of the teacher) and the addressee, (iii) a declaration of the teacher's intentions, and (iv) future praise of the addressee, once he will share the learning of the teacher. In addition, the proper proem implicitly (v) explains the purpose of the teacher's lessons, and (vi) establishes the poem's place within the tradition of didactic poetry. The second part of the proem (8–20) consists of (i) a mythological explanation of the origin of snakes, spiders and the like, (ii) the introduction of Hesiod as source for this mythological origin, (iii) a second mythological story about Orion's assault of Artemis, (iv) a report of the punishment of Orion and its relation to the poisonous scorpion, and (v) an aetiology of the catasterism of Orion.

### *1–7 Opening, Introduction, Addressee*

The poem's opening, being the first half of the proem, introduces its subject, its addressee, and its purported relevance.

**1 Ῥεῖά … θηρῶν:** for the relevance of the opening words of the poem within the didactic tradition see Introduction 5.1. Nic.'s odd opening with ῥεῖα, breaking with the epic convention and distancing himself from both the epic tradition and the mythical past is discussed in Introduction 5.3. The first line of the *Theriaca* states the poet's subject quite clearly: the shapes of and the deadly wounds inflicted by beasts, together with countering remedies. When compared to either Hesiod (ἐτήτυμα, *Op.* 10) or Aratus (ἀστέρας, *Phaen.* 1), Nic.'s announcement of his threefold subject is much more precise; cf. Fakas 2001, 69.

Although the title might give the impression that this is going to be a poem on the habits of animal wildlife in the vein of the biological prose treatises of e.g. Aristotle and Theophrastus, Nic. makes clear in his proem that his poem is

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the titles found in the Posidippus-papyrus are not elliptic, but are to be interpreted as 'things having to do with' (e.g. οἰωνοσκοπικά, 'things having to do with the reading of omens'). This interpretation is less probable, as these titles evidently refer to the separate collections of epigrams within the papyrus, i.e. the plural οἰωνοσκοπικά referring to the subsequent group of *epigrams* dealing with bird divination, *pace* Netz.

of a different kind, by repeatedly choosing negative terms to qualify the animals in question (e.g. ὀλοφώϊα, λοιγόν, κακοεργά, ἄχθεα).

**ὀλοφώϊα:** an epic adj. used a few times by Homer (*Od.* 4.410, 460, 10.289, 17.248), but a closer resemblance can perhaps be determined to [Theoc.] 25.185, a verse which shows more than one similarity to the first line of the *Theriaca*: ἀλλ' ἄρκτους τε σύας τε λύκων τ' ὀλοφώϊον ἔθνος.[2] By using μορφάς ('forms', but 'kinds' is just as apt) Nic. summarises the kind of lethal beasts ps.-Theocritus names separately. Of course ps.-Theocritus mentions other kinds of beasts than the ones Nic. has in mind, but the internal addressee of the *Theriaca* is not aware of this yet, since the true nature of the beasts (i.e. snakes and spiders) is not revealed until lines 8–9; for the division between the internal and external addressee see Introduction 4.3 and 4.4. The horror of ps.-Theocritus' dangerous animals is capped by Nic. through the juxtaposition of the neutral μορφάς to σίνη 'wounds'. This not only enhances the sense of danger, but is also a learned improvement of ps.-Theocritus, since in Nic.'s verse the wounds are dangerous, rather than the beasts which caused them. The notion of destruction is perhaps not certain in Homer, where the adj. simply means 'deceptive' or 'tricky' (said of plans) but it is necessary for ps.-Theocritus and for Nic., both here and in 327, where it is used once more, in the same *sedes*, of ἰός ('poison'); for the derivation and other *loci* see Chryssafis 1981, 195–196.

**θηρῶν:** Ford (1992, 20), analysing the structure and syntax of epic opening lines, remarks: "First in the line comes an emblematic 'title,' … most often it is a noun as the object of the imperat. with a qualifier in the same line making it more specific: 'The wrath … of Achilles'; 'the man … with many turns' (though the genitive … is more common)". Although Nic.'s opening lacks an emblematic title or an imperat., the gen. θηρῶν seems to function in the same way—and occupies the same *sedes*—as Achilles in *Il.* 1.1, showing Nic. in keeping with at least some epic conventions, despite his deviation from others; see Introduction 5.3.

2 **ἀπροϊδῆ:** 'unforeseen'. Logically it is the victim that does not foresee the attacking snake. Here, however, the adj. qualifies the act. part. τύψαντα, which forms a *hypallage* with θηρῶν. This perspective, in which the wounds, or rather

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2 Although [Theoc.] 25 is spurious, and is the creation of a later imitator (*pace* Chryssafis 1981, 11), this does not mean that the poem was necessarily written after the *Theriaca*, as it may well have been a product of the second century BCE, but it does imply that caution is necessary.

the snakes, are striking unforeseen creates the idea that it is the snake that wilfully tries to be unforeseen until the very moment it strikes. In this way Nic. succeeds in conveying a sense of omnipresent danger to his audience, an approach found throughout the *Theriaca*. The word is frequently used by later poets (26× in Nonnus; see De Stefani 2002, 127–128), but Nic. is the only instance in earlier poetry (used again in 18).

**τύψαντα:** the act. part. is grammatically connected to σίνη in the previous line, but it is not the wounds themselves that strike; τύπτω, the normal verb for describing attacks of snakes, spiders and scorpions is used throughout the poem (e.g. 202, 313, 330, 424), as are its cognates (e.g. τύμμα 426, 737, 919, 930; τύψις 921, 933; τυπή 129, 358, 673, 784); see Introduction 6.2.

**λύσιν θ' ἑτεραλκέα κήδευς:** the word ἑτεραλκέα is used in the same *sedes* by Homer five times (*Il.* 7.26, 8.171, 16.362, 17.627, *Od.* 22.236), three of which are in the formulaic line-end μάχης ἑτεραλκέα νίκην. Nic.'s line seems to be a variation of the pattern gen.-acc.-acc. used by Homer, reversing the first gen. and the last acc. Not a remedy 'which decides the victory' (LSJ s.v. I.2), but one 'der die anderen, d.h. die Gegner, abwehrt' (*LfgrE*) here. 'A remedy having the strength to turn around the (source of) grief' seems to be the literal meaning. Although Nic. does not use the words νίκη and μάχη here, the verbal echo of the Homeric formula evokes such a context, in which the focus is on the struggle between humans and dangerous attackers, rather than on incidental confrontations with the less pleasurable side of nature. Throughout the poem Nic. depicts all kinds of dangerous animals as enemies, with which battle must be joined. For a comparison between Homeric battle idiom and Nic.'s warlike descriptions of dangerous beasts see Touwaide 1991, 86–91 and Introduction 8.8. The depiction of confrontations between humans and animals in terms of Homeric battle is not unique in Hellenistic poetry, as is clear from e.g. the struggle between Molorcus and the mice that plague him in Call. fr. 54c Harder (177 Pf. = *SH* 259).

**3 φίλ' Ἑρμησιάναξ:** according to Pasquali (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 7 n. 2) Hermesianax is quite a common name; Gow & Scholfield state that the Hermesianax mentioned here is thus not to be confused with the early Hellenistic poet of the same name, who perhaps was a contemporary of the older Nic.; see Introduction 4.3. A possible connection between the two poets is also disaffirmed by Σ *Ther.* 3, where it is stated that Nic. cannot possibly be addressing the poet Hermesianax, as the latter was much older than Nic. Yet it is interesting to consider if he is perhaps 'speaking' to Hermesianax of Colophon as a

poet of the past, a poet who wrote catalogue poetry as well—albeit in an elegiac vein—, who come from Colophon, and who was evidently an imitator of Hesiod (cf. *CA* 7, pp. 98–100).

The addressee is clearly stated in the opening lines of the poem, an element not found in all earlier didactic poetry, but common in later works. In the *Works and Days* the primal addressee, i.e. Hesiod's brother Perses, is mentioned in 10, although he is only addressed properly in 27. The *Theogony* does not clearly specify its audience, but must be considered a rather different sort of didactic poem; for the distinction between informative (i.e. closer to narrative epic) and instructive didactic poetry see Introduction 3.1 and 3.5. The ps.-Hesiodic *Cheirônos Hypothêkai* (frr. 283–285 MW) lacks mention of an addressee, although it is obvious whom the centaur is addressing. The opening of Empedocles' Περὶ φύσεως is problematic, as it is not clear whether fr. 112 DK (addressed to Empedocles' friends, the inhabitants of Acragas), fr. 1 DK (addressed to Pausanias, who was Empedocles' lover according to the tradition summed up in D.L. 8.60) or some other fragment should be considered the opening of the poem. In the first two cases, however, an internal addressee is mentioned in the first lines of the proem. The prologue of Parmenides' poem, as preserved in Sext. Emp. *Math.* 7.111, is of a quite different nature, as it starts with a narrative *in medias res*. Aratus' addressee is nowhere clearly defined. Fakas (2001, 90–91) points out that the two consecutive imperat.'s in 75–76 of the *Phaenomena* imply the first appeal to an addressee, but the reader has to deduct the collective addressee of sailors and farmers himself. Most later didactic poets, however, seem to have considered mention of an addressee an essential element of didactic poetry; cf. Lucr. 1.26 (Memmius), Verg. *G.* 1.2 (Maecenas), [Opp.] *C.* 1.1–15 (Caracalla, albeit in a series of cryptical allusions), Opp. *H.* 1.3 (Marcus Aurelius).

Nic.'s explicit mention of the addressee in the first lines may have a connection with the lack of an appeal to the Muse or another deity: although one signal of epic-didactic poetry is missing, the explicit address to a pupil as a quality of a didactic poetry compensates for this. For the use of the vocative of φίλος early in a didactic poem cf. Archestr. 5.2 O-S (*SH* 135); "the emphasis on the friendship between the poet and the addressee helps suggest that the information provided will be useful and good"; Olson & Sens 2000, 25. For Hermesianax in relation to the ring composition of the poem see 957 n. For the internal and external addressees see Introduction 4.3 and 4.4.

**πολέων κυδίστατε παῶν**: the superl. κυδίστατε is not attested elswhere. The adj. is a heteroclite mixture of κύδιστος, an irregular superl. of κυδρός, and the regular superl. ending -τατος. A similar formation is found in 344, where

πρεσβίστατος combines the irregular superl. πρέσβιστος with a regular superl. suffix. Irregular forms of superl. are not uncommon in Hellenistic poetry. In 11 Nic. has μύχατος as superl. of μύχιος. Callimachus has μαλκίστατον (*Hec.* 139 H. = 384 Pf.); τερπνίστατα (93.3 Harder) and τερπνίστον (*Hec.* 150 H. = 319 Pf.). Antimachus (see παῶν below) has ἀφνειέστατος (62 Matthews = 87 Wyss) instead of ἀφνειότατος, probably for metrical reasons; see Matthews 1996, 198. An earlier example (given by Matthews *l.c.*) is αἰδοιέστατος in Pi. *O.* 3.42. There is perhaps something to say for the v.l. κηδέστατε, which would show a closer relation between Nicander and his addressee, κηδεστής meaning 'related by marriage' (a.o used for a son-in-law); it would also be varying on Homer's κήδιστος (*Il.* 9.642)

The word πηός (Doric παός) is generally used for relatives or in-laws, indicating that Hermesianax, the addressee, is a kinsman of the poet. A comparison between Nic. and his relative Hermesianax, and Hesiod and his brother Perses, provides an interesting contrast: whereas Hesiod finds fault with his brother for bribing the kings and shunning proper work (*Op.* 27–41), Nic., or rather the persona of the teacher, addresses his relative Hermesianax in positive terms like κυδίστατε, 'most honoured of my many kinsmen'. The variation in tone between positive and negative addresses in Hesiod is already evident when the address to Perses is compared to Cheiron's address to Achilles in the *Cheirônos Hypothêkai*: Εὖ νῦν μοι τὰ ἕκαστα μετὰ φρεσὶ πευκαλίμῃσι | φράζεσθαι (fr. 283.1–2 MW) 'and now, pray, observe all these things well in your wise heart'.

If it is plausible to believe that Nic. is addressing the *poet* Hermesianax (see Introduction 4.3) the phrase πολέων κυδίστατε παῶν ('most honoured of my many kinsmen') could be interpreted as a corroboration of that view: (i) If παός is interpreted in a less strict sense it can be suggested that it applies to 'related poets' instead of relatives, in which case Nic. would be addressing his colleague as a fellow poet; cf. Σ *Od.* 8.581 Dindorf, where the word is explained as ἑταῖρος, and Rengakos 1992, 31. (ii) If Nic. is referring to the poet Hermesianax, the use of κυδίστατε would gain meaning, as Hermesianax was a precursor of many Hellenistic poets and must have appealed to Nic. in particular as a writer of catalogue poetry (cf. *CA* 7, pp. 98–100 = 3 Lightfoot). (iii) If 'most honoured of my many kinsmen' refers to poets instead of relatives, Nic. could be punning on the fact that Colophon was famous for its many poets indeed. Apart from the claim Colophon laid on the origin of Homer (see 957–958 n.) there are Xenophanes, Mimnermus, Antimachus and the comic poet Phoenix, in addition to Hermesianax and Nic. himself. The title of Nic.'s treaty Περὶ τῶν ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ποιητῶν, mentioned in the scholia (Σ *Ther.* 3), not only points to the existence of a substantial number of Colophonian poets of at least some repute, but is also indicative of Nic.'s interest in these poets.

According to Σ *Ther.* 3. Nic.'s choice for the Doric form παός can be explained as a sign of appreciation of Antimachus, another proto-Hellenistic poet, of whom Nic. was an admirer (ζηλωτής), διὸ καὶ ἐν ἐνίοις δωρίζει (Σ *Ther.* 3). According to Matthews (1996, 364) Antimachus is imitating Homer by using a Doric form: "There are numerous instances of 'Doric' long α for Attic-Ionic η in the Homeric poems". If we are to believe that the scholia are correct in assuming that Nic. is using a Doric word out of appreciation of Antimachus, then it is striking that within one line, very close to the beginning, we find two references not only to two important predecessors of Hellenistic poetry, but also to two important fellow citizens from the town of Colophon.

4 **ἔμπεδα:** the only other instances of ἔμπεδα in this *sedes* are later (Diod. *AP* 6.243.6 = *FGE* 2117, Nonn. *D.* 38.218). Nic. probably has Arat. 13 in mind: ὄφρ' ἔμπεδα πάντα φύωνται ("so that everything may grow without fail"; transl. Kidd). In the *Phaenomena* it is Zeus who has fixed the stars into constellations and who gives men the signs of the seasons. In the *Theriaca* it is the poet who provides the wisdom. Not only is he able to teach his lessons easily (ῥεῖα, 1) like Zeus, but he also does this without fail (ἔμπεδα), not being second even to the highest god. The poet's self-assured opening statement is perhaps a reaction to Callimachus, who brings up the issue of the poet's ability to present one continuous poem in a decisive manner in the prologue to the *Aetia* (fr. 1.3 Harder), ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκές.

**φωνήσαιμι:** as Cazzaniga (1975, 180) points out, the combination κέ … φωνήσαιμι (1–4) may well be an echo of Hesiod's κε … μυθησαίμην in *Op.* 10, thus adding up to other allusions to the opening of the *Works and Days* in the proem of the *Theriaca*.

**πολύεργος:** a very rare adj. The only other instance of this word in poetry is [Theoc.] 25.27, φυτοσκάφοι οἱ πολύεργοι ('hard-working gardeners'), which could be Nic.'s source for this word, although used in a different *sedes*; for the problematic use of [Theoc.] 25 see 1 n. In [Theoc.] 25.25–26 three and four times ploughed fields are mentioned, a context evoked by Nic. use of ἀροτρεύς (4) and ἀροτρεύοντι (6). Apart from a possible allusion to *Idyll* 25 a play on *Il.* 9.320 may be intended: κάτθαν' ὁμῶς ὅ τ' ἀεργὸς ἀνὴρ ὅ τε πολλὰ ἐοργώς. In 9.318–320 Achilles complains to Odysseus that the coward is rewarded no less than the brave warrior. Achilles himself, having fought tremendously, is nonetheless denied due respect and in the end death comes alike to the idle man and to him who works much (πολλὰ ἐοργώς). By contrast, in the *Theriaca* the πολύεργος *does* show respect, as the countrymen shall have regard (ἀλέγοι,

5) for one who knows how to cure venomous bites; for the reference to the Homeric battle context see Introduction 8.8. A third explanation for the use of this rare compound can be found in connection with Hesiod. The note on line 3 compares Nic. and his honoured kinsman Hermesianax to Hesiod and his dishonourable brother Perses. In several passages in the *Works and Days* Hesiod finds fault with his brother (cf. *Op.* 27 ff., 274 ff.) but in *Op.* 312–313 Hesiod makes clear that Perses will gain respect when he puts himself to work: εἰ δέ κεν ἐργάζῃ, τάχα σε ζηλώσει ἀεργός | πλουτέοντα, 'but if you work, the idle man (ἀεργός, at line-end) will soon be envious of you, because you are rich'. With this in mind it is possible to see a reference to Hesiod's ἀεργός in Nic.'s use of πολύεργος, as if to say: 'If you pay attention to my words, Hermesianax, not only will the idle (ἀεργός) man look up to you, but you will gain respect (ἀλέγοι, 5) even from the hard-working (πολύεργος) ploughman.' If the allusion to Hesiod is correct it would explain for the placement of the word at line-end, changing the word order of [Theoc.] 25.27.

**ἀροτρεύς:** a Hellenistic variation of ἀροτήρ, also found e.g. in A.R. 1.1172, [Theoc.] 25.1 and 51, Arat. 1075, 1117 (all at line-ends), 1125 (gen. plur.) and Bion fr. 13.8 Reed; see Kidd 1997, 553 and Introduction 6.10. According to Kidd Nic.'s πολύεργος ἀροτρεύς is a conscious echo of Aratus 1075, but that only accounts for ἀροτρεύς, since πολύεργος is not used in the *Phaenomena*. If Nic.'s imitation is intentional, a comparison can be made between the farmer in *Ther.* 4 and the farmers in Arat. 1075–1076: χαίρει καὶ γεράνων ἀγέλαις ὡραῖος ἀροτρεὺς | ὥριον ἐρχομέναις, ὁ δ' ἀώριος αὐτίκα μᾶλλον ("The punctual farmer is also glad to see flocks of cranes arriving on time, the unpunctual when they come rather late"; transl. Kidd). Just as Aratus' farmers know that timing is essential for a successful harvest (cf. the postponement of ploughing in Arat. 1117) Nic.'s farmers know that timely action is of the utmost importance for a successful treatment of a snakebite.

The mention of farmers, followed by herds and woodcutters nuances the setting of the poem: from now on we will be learning about the countryside, away from urban surroundings. Rural areas are of course more likely to harbour snakes, and the danger of snake attacks for farmers and the like in particular is known from other sources as well, e.g. Cato A*gr.* 102, Verg. G. 3.414–439, Scrib. Larg. 163, *Geop.* 2.47.

5 **βουκαῖος:** a variation of βουκόλος, also used in Nic. fr. 90 G-S. In Theocritus' *Idyll* 10 Βουκαῖος is used as a personal name, as well as Βοῦκος in 10.38, which is "presumably a familiar shortening of Βουκαῖος"; Hunter 1999, 210. Apart from Nic. the only other instance of βουκαῖος is Posidipp. 22.1 AB, where it is used as

an adj. for ὄρνις ('wagtail'), presumably named after its ability to herald good weather for farmers. In *Ther.* 74 Nic. has βούτης, which is a more common variation (cf. A. *Pr.* 568, E. *Andr.* 280, Theoc. 1.80, 6.42 (βούτας), Eryc. *AP* 6.255.5 = *GPh* 2228).

It is unclear whether βουκαῖος represents a 'bucolic' oxherd, attending his grazing flock, or someone who drives oxen across a field in order to plough. Lines 5–6 give only two likely locations for a snake-assault, i.e. the forest (καθ' ὕλην) and the ploughing-field (ἀροτρεύοντι). Although the ploughing-field hardly seems a likely place for grazing cattle, Hesiod shows that woods were used as grazing sites for forest-fed cows, as can be gathered from the adj. ὑλοφάγος (*Op.* 591), *pace* Sinclair (1932, 63) who interprets the adj. as 'fed on fresh leaves' and West (1978, 307) whose comment 'put out to graze, unlike the stall-fed oxen' interprets the word as free-range cows, but ignores the element of the forest. Other interpretors, however, have translated ὑλοφάγος as 'wood-bred' (Lombardo 1993, 41) or 'fed in the woods' (Tandy & Neale 1996, 115). According to Athanassakis (1983, 103), commenting on *Op.* 591, "meat is richer and tastier when it comes from an animal that has been allowed to graze in open pastures and woodlands where the animal, in addition to grass, also eats small plants, shrubs, and low-lying branches of certain trees." There are two arguments in favour of the second interpretation of ox-driver: (i) When Nic. is elsewhere referring to wandering herds he uses the word νομεύς (48, 473, 898) or ἀμορβός (49). (ii) According to the scholia the word can either mean θεριστής ('mower', 'reaper'), βουκόλος, ὁ ζεύγεσι βοῶν ἑπόμενος (a driver of yoked oxen) or γεηπόνος ἁπλῶς (simply a husbandman) (Σ *Ther.* 5a). If Nic. means ox-driver instead of herdsman, a clear distinction can be made between the traditional herdsman we find in Theocritus, living in his bucolic *locus amoenus*, indulging in singing matches and playing on his syrinx, and the kind of herd Nic. is describing, who has to toil and is exposed to danger. For the relevance of herds to the setting of Nic.'s poem see Bernsdorff 2001, 187–189. For Nic.'s keenness on variation see Introduction 6.10.

**ἀλέγοι:** see 4 n. on πολύεργος. The use of ἀλέγω with acc. in poetry is rare. In Homer it is found only in *Il.* 16.388, θεῶν ὄπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες, repeated in Hes. *Op.* 251. In both cases the verb not only means 'respect', but also has an undertone of 'pay attention to', 'heed', a meaning relevant to this context. The addressee will not only gain respect for his knowledge, but he will also gain power as people will realise his words are not to be ignored; see also Magnelli 2010, 221–222.

**ὀροιτύπος:** 'woodcutter', used again in 377 and explained by the scholia as ὑλοτόμος (Σ *Ther.* 5c). The only two other instances of this word in poetry

are Call. *Aetia* fr. 190a.6 Harder (= *SH* 276 = 110 Massimilla), and Pers. *AP* 7.445.3 (*HE* 2877). The ploughman, the herd and the woodcutter are typical 'low' characters of country life and therefore liable to exposure to dangerous animals; cf. Zanker 1987, 100 and Jacques 2002, 77. Their designation in unusual poetic words (ἀροτρεύς for ἀροτήρ, βουκαῖος for βουκόλος, ὀροιτύπος for ὑλοτόμος or δρυτόμος) is typical of epic and emphasises the contrast between the low subject matter and the dignity of the epic style; cf. Hutchinson 1988, 227. A similar technique is found in some epigrams of Anyte, especially those that are categorised as pet epitaphs (*HE* 696–713 = 9–12 Geogh.), on which Greene (2000, 25) comments: "What is particularly striking about these poems is their extensive application of the heroic language of Homeric verse to the sphere of the ordinary and everyday [...]". This not merely adds to an epic style applied to non-epic characters, but also evokes a context of one of Homer's main subjects: battle. By depicting ploughman, herd and woodcutter in a Homeric fashion the poet prepares the reader for a struggle between man and beast in an Iliadic vein; see Introduction 8.8.

The activities of the three types of rustics Nic. is describing can already be found in the *Works and Days*: ploughing (384, 405, 467), herding (406) and woodcutting (420–421, 805–880); see also 21–34 n.

**6 ἀροτρεύοντι:** Nic.'s preference for less common variants probably explains for his use of ἀροτρεύω instead of the common ἀρόω. A play on Call. *Dian.* 161, which has ἀροτριόωντι in the same *sedes* may well be intended, showing Nic. capping Callimachus' rather plain ἀροτριόωντι; see Bornmann 1968, 78. Nic.'s choice for ἀροτρεύοντι accords with ἀροτρεύς in 4.

**βάλῃ ἔπι:** *tmesis inversa*; for Nic.'s use of less common word-patterns, characteristic of poetry see Introduction 6.8. According to McLennan (1977, 76) in Callimachus "there is never more than one word between the verb and the preverb", a practice followed by Nic. here, but not by Apollonius (e.g. 3.1018, στράπτεν ἔρως ἡδεῖαν ἀπό). The syntax is somewhat confusing as the subject of the finite verb in the subordinate clause is to be deduced from θηρῶν in the first line and the deadly bite described here.

**λοιγόν:** a rare instance, used again in 733, of λοιγός used as an adj., unless it is a noun used in apposition, as Cazzaniga (1963b) suggests; see also Spatafora 2007a, 96. The more common form used by Homer (*Il.* 1.518, 573; 21.533; 23.310) and Apollonius (1.469) is λοίγιος. In 921 Nic. uses λοιγής (cf. *Al.* 256), while 207 has yet another variant (λοιγήεις); see Introduction 6.10. It is noticeable that Nic. uses three variants of the adj., while avoiding the common λοίγιος. The only

other instance of λοιγός used as an adj. is Eryc. *AP* 7.368.2 (*GPh* 2232), where it qualifies Ares (unless we should read λυγρός; see Cazzaniga 1963b, 472).

Again a Homeric word with a warlike connotation is used by Nic. in a non-military context to add the impression of battle between man and beast, rather than incidental confrontations with natural phenomena such as poisonous animals; see Introduction 8.8.

7 **τοῖα … νούσων:** this line, the last of the proem proper, shows several echoes of word-ends from line 1, all in the same *sedes*: ῥεῖα ~ τοῖα, ὀλοφώϊα ~ ἀλεξητήρια, θηρῶν ~ νούσων. The verbal echoes add to the sense of completion of the proem. This is the first of many four-word lines, and with a total of 40 instances, in his use of *versus tetracoli* Nic. is close to Aratus (45× in 1150 lines, much more frequent than Homer), who seems to use such lines as weighty and impressive; see Kidd 1997, 35. As Kidd observes, both the opening lines of the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* are four-word lines, but Nic. reserves his for the last lines of the first (7) and second part (20) of the proem; see Introduction 6.8.

**περιφρασθέντος:** 'having knowledge of', rather than 'learn, consider'. The idea of learning necessarily precedes the kind of knowledge implied here. Grammatically περιφρασθέντος is incongruent with σέ in 4, but the same kind of anacolouthon is found among other Hellenistic poets (e.g. Phanocl. *CA* 1.5–6, p. 107); see Jacques 2002, 2. The phenomenon already occurs in Homer, cf. *Il.* 20.413–414, *Od.* 4.646; on such syntax see Magnelli 2002, 7 n. 10.

**ἀλεξητήρια νούσων:** ἀλεξητήριον (sc. φάρμακον) is used again in 100, 714 and 934, always in the same *sedes*. Elsewhere the noun has undertones of defense in a situation of war (e.g. Gorg. *Hel.* 16), which concords with Nic.'s general presentation of the enmity between man and snake in terms of battle, with corresponding images; see Introduction 8.8. For the qualification of the results of a snakebite as a νοῦσος cf. S. *Ph.* 266.

### *8–20 Mythological Transition*

The mythological account that constitutes the second part of the proem deals briefly with two myths: (i) the origin of dangerous reptiles from the Titans' blood, and (ii) the insolence of Orion. Both myths are in fact aetiologies, as the first myth accounts for the existence of poisonous animals on earth, whereas the second explains the *catasterism* of Orion. See Introduction 8.3. Although the story is primarily told to the teacher's addressee, it is obvious that at the same time the poet speaks to his audience of cultured readers who are interested in mythological lore here.

8 **Ἀλλ' ἤτοι:** a Homeric line-opening used dozens of times both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (although in some editions written as ἦ τοι). Nic. does not seem to have a particular line in mind, but merely applies familiar epic diction to the opening of the second half of the proem. The combination is used again in 121, 620, and in *Al.* 12, where it is placed right after the proem, just as it is here. The combination is used to focus on a new topic, closing off the topic just dwelt on. Among Hellenistic poets this Homeric combination at line-opening was well known; cf. Arat. 687, Theoc. 12.22, 22.189, A.R. 4.1645. For ἀλλά (without ἤτοι) used in the same way cf. *Ther.* 21.

**κακοεργά:** once in Homer (*Od.* 18.54) as an adj. of γαστήρ, once in Aratus (131) said of a footpad's sword (both in the sames *sedes* as Nic.). In Theoc. 15.47 κακοεργός (at line-end) is used as a substantive meaning 'villain' in much the same way as in Arat. 131 since it is applied to (the absence of) robbers sneaking up to commit murder in the streets of Alexandria. Nic.'s portrayal of animals as men with bad intent—as in Aratus and Theocritus—is not confined to line 8 but is a feature of many of Nic.'s descriptions of poisonous creatures in the *Theriaca* (see Introduction 8.1). Theoc. 15.47–48 has two more interesting points: οὐδεὶς κακοεργός | δαλεῖται τὸν ἰόντα παρέρπων Αἰγυπτιστί: (1) in Theocritus creeping (παρέρπω[3]), a quality typical of snakes, is applied metaphorically to robbers, whereas κακοεργός is used literally. In Nic. these usages are reversed chiastically, as ἕρπω (cf. ἑρπηστάς in 9) is used literally, whereas κακοεργός is used in a way pointing to evil intent as a human quality, applied here to animal behaviour; (2) Αἰγυπτιστί ('in the Egyptian fashion' i.e. 'craftily') shows that Nic. is not the first to connect Egypt with negative qualities of its inhabitants (cf. 759–768); for Nic.'s use of personification see Introduction 8.1. κακοεργός is used again in 111 with ἰός, in 277 with κυνόδοντα, and in 746 with ὕπνος. The adj. can also be interpreted in combination with πολύεργος in 4: whereas humans work hard to earn an honest living, spiders can only act in a harmful way. The opposition between good and evil is coloured by the poet's obvious sympathy for those that are wronged despite their toiling.

3 Bulloch (1985a, 114), commenting on Call. *Lav.Pall.* 4, points out that the use of ἕρπω for ἔρχομαι is a normal feature of Doric (the dialect of Theoc. 15), and does not point at significant poetic use itself. This applies to the compound παρέρπω as well, e.g. in AP 7.712.1, a Doric epigram ascribed to Erinna (fr. dub. 6 Neri). This, however, does not imply that Nic., even if he was aware of this peculiarity of Doric, considered the use of ἕρπω in Theoc. 15.48 of no poetical significance, as he may well have considered it an apt verb to play on, coming from his context of ἕρπετα.

**φαλάγγια:** a φαλάγγιον is a (kind of) venomous spider, distinguished by Aristotle from an ἀράχνιον (*HA* 622b38, see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 171).[4] Nic. does not use the latter and φαλάγγια seems to be a designation for spiders in general. The combination of snakes and spiders as characteristic noxious creatures is not uncommon, cf. Pl. *Euthd.* 290a (ἐχεών τε καὶ φαλαγγίων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θηρίων), Thphr. *HP* 9.11.1 (τοὺς ἔχεις καὶ τὰ φαλάγγια), D. 25.96 (οὐδένα πώποτ' ἴσως ὑμῶν ἔχις ἔδακεν οὐδὲ φαλάγγιον μηδὲ δάκοι), and A. *Supp.* 887–896 (ἄραχνος ὥς [...] δίπους ὄφις· ἔχιδνα δ' ὥς).

**ἀνιγρούς:** 'grievous', a rare (and therefore preferred) synonym of ἀνιαρός, used again in 701, and in *Al.* 36 and 627. The only two other examples before Nic. are Call. 75.14 Harder and possibly 85.12 Harder; always at line-end.

9 **ἔχιάς:** technically an ἔχις is a sand viper (see 129 n.), but it is more likely that Nic. is referring to poisonous snakes in general here, next to the general category of reptiles (ἑρπηστάς).

**ἄχθεα μυρία γαίης:** a combined reference may be intended, conflating (i) ἄχθος ἀρούρης in *Il.* 18.104 and *Od.* 20.379 (both at line-end) and (ii) ἔθνεα μυρία θνητῶν in Emp. frr. 35.7 and 35.16 DK (both at line-end); cf. Introduction 7.3. (i) In the *Iliad* ἄχθος ἀρούρης is said by Achilles about his own position. As a useless burden on the earth Achilles failed to prevent Patroclus' death. In the *Odyssey* it is used by one of the suitors to Telemachus about Odysseus, who is in beggar's guise. In both cases the emphasis is on uselessness, having nothing good to offer. Nic. seems to make the same point about spiders, reptiles and vipers: nothing good can come of them and they are merely a burden for the earth. Nic.'s mythological story adds another meaning to the gen. γαίης: spiders, reptiles and vipers are not only countless burdens *on* the earth, but also spring *from* the earth, as is explained by their origination from the Titans' blood. A variation of this line-end is repeated in 399: σπειραχθέα κνώδαλα γαίης. (ii) ἔθνεα

4 A fragment (Σ *Ther.* 12a) of Theophilus (third century BCE), a *grammaticus* and a pupil of Zenodotus, tells the story of two Attic siblings, Phalanx and his sister Arachne. Athena taught the boy all about the craft of war (ὁπλομαχία, hence the aetiological connection to φάλαγξ, the boy's name), while his sister was instructed in the craft of weaving (ἱστοποιία, hence the aetiological connection of spiders weaving webs); Cazzaniga 1957b, 277–278. When the two siblings had intercourse the goddess was infuriated at their incest and changed Phalanx and Arachne into spiders. Later on they were devoured by their own children (Σ *Ther.* 12a). There is, however, no evidence that Nic. knew this story, or based his collocation of the two words on it.

μυρία θνητῶν, occurs twice in a fragment of Empedocles in which the origin of living creatures is related according to Empedocles' philosophical cosmogony. Although the verbal echo is faint, it is striking that we find a similar line-end in one of Nic.'s predecessors within the genre of didactic poetry, in particular when we are also told how earth's first creatures came into being; see also 10 n. Apart from these possible combined references, the phrasing echoes similar collocations at line-end from early epic, such as κήδεα μυρία πέσσω (*Il.* 24.639), ὀνείατα μυρία κεῖται (*Od.* 10.9), ἐπεὶ πόρε μυρία ἕδνα (*Od.* 11.282) and φυτὰ μυρία φύσεις (*h.Ap.* 55). As Spatafora (2007a, 97) points out, Verg. *G.* 1.184–185, *quae plurima terrae* | *monstra ferunt* seems to be an imitation of Nic.'s combination here.

**10 Τιτήνων … ἀφ' αἵματος:** among Hellenistic poets the story of the creation of snakes from the blood of a primeval being is well-known from Apollonius. In the passage dealing with the death of the Argonaut Mopsus (A.R. 4.1502–1536) the poet tells us that Perseus, after having beheaded the Gorgo, flew across Libya to bring Medusa's head to king Polydectes. The drops of dark blood that fell from the severed head to the earth then produced snakes (4.1513); cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.616–620, Lucan. 9.697–701. A similar story was told in Apollonius' *Foundation of Alexandria*: Ἀπολλώνιος δὲ ὁ Ῥόδιος ἐν τῇ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρείας κτίσει [φήσιν] ἀπὸ τῶν σταγόνων τοῦ τῆς Γοργόνος αἵματος (*CA* 4, p. 5 = Σ *Ther.* 12a). There are no verbal echoes from this passage in the *Theriaca*, but Nic. may have had different versions of the creation of snakes in mind, in which blood played a role. For an interpretation of 'Titans' here see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 171.

An interesting variant of the story is the creation of mankind from the blood shed by the Titans, as pointed out by West (1983, 165). Although there are no references to this version earlier than the Roman period (e.g. Ov. *Met.* 1.156–162, where Ovid speaks of Giants instead of Titans, a persistent confusion discussed by Vian 1952, 169–174), stories like these may be much older. Opp. *H.* 5.9, opening with Τιτήνων (possibly in imitation of Nic. *Ther.* 10), is a reference to the story of man's creation out of drops of blood from the Titans. The scholiast adds τινὲς δέ φασιν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν Τιτάνων πολεμούντων μετὰ τῶν οὐρανίων θεῶν, μάλιστα δὲ μετὰ τοῦ Διός, καὶ ἡττηθέντων, ὅθεν καί, φασί, βροτὸς ὁ ἄνθρωπος λέγεται ὡς ἀπὸ βρότου ἢ τοῦ αἱματηροῦ μολυσμοῦ τῶν Τιτάνων (Σ Opp. *H.* 5.1 = Bussemaker 1851, 355); other references in West 1983, 165 n. 87. Nic. seems eager to stress the opposition between man and beast in the *Theriaca*, but various elements in the poem bring both together, like the poet's portrayal of snakes with human qualities (on which see Introduction 8.1), the parallel between snakes and humans in 21 (on which see n.) and the common origin of snakes, spiders and humans out of the blood of the Titans that is called to mind here.

**ἐνέπουσιν**: verbs of speech in the third person plur. can be used to introduce a λόγος προτέρων. Through their use a distance can be created between the poet's own beliefs and allegations for which he does not want to take credit, or for which he has reservations; see Stinton (1976, 67), who speaks of an "apologetic disclaimer", conveying 'the story is not mine, I only repeat the words of others'. A similar use is found in A.R. 1.26, 2.905; Euph. *CA* 34.2, p. 37 (35 Van Groningen = 37 Lightfoot); *AP* 5.100 9 (*FGE* 1060), *APl* 696. The use of φασί in e.g. Call. fr. 75.4 Harder, *Jov.* 6, *Dian.* 210, and *Phaen.* 645 is comparable; cf. West (1966, 252) on Hes. *Th.* 306 and Jacques (2002, 2) on *Ther.* 10. This use is, however, different from that of φασί in e.g. *Il.* 6.100, *Od.* 2.238 and 6.42 on which see De Jong 1987, 237–238. De Bakker (2007, 160–178) has shown that, at least in Herodotus, the idea that the use of such verbs as a means to express doubt about or a desire to distance oneself from the information which one presents, cannot be maintained. Therefore, if, with Stinton, Nic. is creating distance between his own beliefs and the information he gives us here, it is because we are dealing with a particular category, viz. poets reflecting on mythical stories.

Alternatively, ἐνέπουσιν is perhaps an instance of a so-called 'Alexandrian footnote' (cf. Hinds 1998, 1–5, following Ross 1975, 78, following Norden 123–124), or 'illusory footnote' (so Horsfall 1990). If this is the case Nic. is not simply referring to some old story of Greek folklore or myth, but directs his reader to a concrete and well-known version of the story as told by a previous poet, c.q. Apollonius Rhodius (see previous n.). Problematic is the plur., as it implies that Nic. is thinking of at least two different poets, but here we may be hampered by our lack of knowledge of other Alexandrian sources.

**εἰ ἐτεόν περ**: the phrase εἰ ἐτεόν περ is a close echo of Aratus' εἰ ἐτεὸν δή (*Phaen.* 30), also at line-end, which again is borrowed from Homer; see Kidd 1997, 185 and Effe 1974b, 120. According to Kidd it is particularly suited to a genealogical context, which would make Nic.'s borrowing very apt, since it relates to the mythological origin of all monstrous animals from the Titans' blood. The interpretation of Aratus' statement is not unproblematic: Kidd understands it to be an utterance of 'detached scepticism', whereas Stinton (1976, 63–64) argues that "it is not that the poet—or scientist—'does not concur' with what he professes to doubt, but rather that such expressions serve to enhance the objective tone proper to this kind of poetry." A.R. 1.154 has εἰ ἐτεόν γε in a somewhat similar context, although in a different *sedes*. In A.R. 2.209 εἰ ἐτεὸν δή (at line-end), spoken by Phineus, functions as a rhetorical device as well. In this case, however, these words are spoken to express the seer's lack of doubt and should be interpreted as feigned scepticism; see 309 n. Somewhat similar, also in a context of origination, is Call. *Del.* 83, ἦ ῥ' ἐτεὸν ἐγένοντο τότε δρύες ἡνίκα Νύμφαι; ('is it really

true that trees and nymphs were born together?'), where ἐτεόν expresses disbelief, not objectivity. Sistakou (2012, 199), taking into account Nicander's fr. 31 G-S from the *Ophiaca* (explaining that the Clarus region was cleared of snakes by Apollo), suggests that this line shows how the poet 'is divided between his faith in science … and his religious background'.

As a statement of the persona of the teacher the remark seems to hover somewhere between a claim to veracity, endorsed by an external, archaic authority, and mild disbelief, as it remains unclear whether Hesiod actually treated the story in one of his poems; Knoefel & Covi (1991, 52), concluding that Nic. did not know the *Theogony* very well, since he "misquotes" Hesiod here, seem to be missing the point. The poet himself, however, controlling the image of the teacher's persona, knows very well that he made up the aetiology just presented; cf. Cazzaniga (1975, 175) who recognised the "pura fantasia nicandrea".

**11 μυχάτοιο:** irreg. superl. of μύχιος, cf. 184. Apparently a Hellenistic coinage (cf. 3 n. on κυδίστατε and Magnelli 1999, 171 on Alex. Aet. 3.20.): Call. *Dian.* 68 has ἐκ μυχάτοιο at line-end and A.R. 1.170 has μυχάτῃ … καλιῇ, both phrases referring to the innermost recess or corner of a house. Nic., however, uses it to describe some seclusion of Melisseeis, which, according to the scholia, is a part of the Helicon. The scholia go on to mention that this particular region was named after its king Melisseus (Σ *Ther.* 11c), but the only known Melisseus is a Cretan king ([Apollod.] 1.5 W. = 1.1 F.; Hyg. *Fab.* 182) unrelated to this site.

**Μελισσήεντος ἐπ' ὄχθαις:** a play may be intended with [Theoc.] 25.9 (ἐπ' ὄχθαις Εἰλίσσοντος at line-end) which, although in a different order, shows some similarities. If a learned variation is intended it would account for Nic.'s choice for the otherwise hardly known Melisseeis. According to the scholia this is the part of the Helicon where Hesiod encountered the Muses as narrated in Hes. *Th.* 22 (Σ *Ther.* 11c). The story of Hesiod's confrontation with the Muses had of course been a topic of interest for at least one previous Hellenistic author, as can be gathered from Callimachus' dream in the *Aetia* (frr. 2 and 2d Harder), and referred to again at the end of the fourth book (fr. 112 Harder). This would make a variation on both Hesiod and Callimachus the more likely. If Melisseeis is to be regarded as a learned variation on Heliconian topography Nic. may have thought of what seems to be similar play in Call. fr. 2f.16–17 Harder (2a Pf.), in which the spring Aganippe is glossed as 'a fountain on Helicon'; cf. Nisetich 2001, 61–65. There may, however, have been other accounts of Hesiod's famous meeting on the Helicon to which Nic. is referring here.

12 **Ἡσίοδος:** the profound influence of Hesiod on the *Theriaca* is not limited to this mention, yet the fact that he is called by name here, so early in the poem, is striking. It can well be considered a tribute to his status as the first inventor of the didactic genre, particularly when viewed together with Nic.'s reference to Homer in *Ther.* 957. Interestingly, it is not in his capacity as didactic poet that Hesiod is named here, but as source of knowledge with regard to mythical genealogy; see Introduction 3.11–12.

**κατέλεξε:** although frequently used in a context of epic recitation, this is a less common example of the intransitive use of καταλέγω (cf. *Od.* 3.80, 14.99, A.R. 1.984, Call. *Del.* 274). The meaning is clear ('narrated', 'explained') if κατέλεξε is considered elliptic, but if we allow a reference to Hesiod in his capacity as one of the first catalogue ('καταλέγω') poets, there may be an underlying meaning which does not need an elliptic object: 'Hesiod, who composed a catalogue.' A parallel for such a depiction of Hesiod can be found in Hermesianax (*CA* 7, p. 98 = 3 Lightfoot), where Hesiod is portrayed as Ἡσίοδον πάσης ἤρανον ἱστορίης ('Hesiod, keeper of all knowledge') in 22, followed by πάσας δὲ λόγων ἀνεγράψατο βίβλους | ὑμνῶν, ἐκ πρώτης παιδὸς ἀνερχόμενος ('he wrote down all books of stories as he sang, starting from the first girl') in 25–26. These verses, referring to Hesiod's reputation as writer of the Ἠοῖαι or *Catalogue of women*, clearly support the idea of Hesiod as archetypal catalogue poet. The form κατέλεξε (though without the catalogue-undertone) may have been borrowed from Hes. *Th.* 627. For the use of καταλέγω for presenting catalogues see Kühlmann 1973, 23–28; cf. Introduction 3.12.

Although Nic. tries to make us believe that Hesiod composed his song on the Helicon himself, the only thing we are told is that Hesiod encountered the Muses, who breathed their divine voice into him there (Hes. *Th.* 31–32). The problematic nature of this 'inspiration' is increased by the phrase καί μ' ἐκέλονθ' ὑμνεῖν (*Th.* 33): did the Muses give Hesiod the skill and knowledge to compose the *Theogony*, or were they in fact themselves responsible for the subject of Hesiod's catalogue? This is the second instance in the proem where we would expect the Muses to be mentioned (see 1 n.), but Nic. has discreetly disposed of them, making Hesiod solely responsible for his poetry. As such, Hesiod's depiction constitutes an interesting parallel with Nic., who engages in modern catalogue poetry without the Muses as well.

**Περμησσοῖο:** a clear reference to Hes. *Th.* 5, where the same form is used in the same *sedes*. Hesiod speaks of the stream to describe one of the places where the Muses usually bathe. Nic., who is more interested in Hesiod than in the Muses, makes no mention of them. Once more we would expect the Muses to

be mentioned (see 1 n. and previous n. on κατέλεξε). It seems Nic. is avoiding them on purpose again, while still evoking their presence by making a hard to miss reference to the opening lines of the *Theogony*. Throughout the poem Nic. makes clear that he is quite capable of fulfilling his task without invoking the aid of a deity, excluding the Muses not only from the opening lines of the *Theriaca*, but even excluding them entirely from his version of the story of Hesiod's encounter with the Muses. We might even deduce that Nic. considers Hesiod's Muse encounter an improper story, not doing justice to Hesiod's own talents. By overtly referring to the Permessus, the poet not only establishes a link with Hesiod, but also with Callimachus, who related his Hesiodic dream and encounter with the Muses (cf. Hes. *Th.* 22) in the *Aetia* (frr. 1.41–45, 2, and 2f.20 Harder = 2a Pf.). Nic., incorporating his own version of Hesiodic mythology, indulges in less-known names (Τιτηνίς), places (Μελισσήεντος), and stories (Orion's seduction of Artemis).

13–14 **τὸν δὲ χαλαζήεντα … | σκορπίον:** the second part of the mythological transition starts without any marker other than δέ, which makes it quite unexpected. Although the two stories are unrelated except for the subject of scorpions (as implied in the ἄχθεα μυρία in 9), the poet gives us the impression that to him the transition makes perfect sense. This is an example of Nic.'s pseudo-associative principle of composition: by casually linking two stories by means of a simple particle the audience is made to believe that the poet just happened to think of the second story; see Introduction 5.7. Nic. does not want to dwell longer than necessary on what is apparently just an excursus to him and seems in a hurry to finish his proem and start with the technicalities of the actual subject matter.

**χαλαζήεντα:** according to White (1987, 3–7) "causing a hail-like shivering", not "causing skin eruptions" (LSJ s.v. χαλαζήεις II). In her interpretation the bite of the scorpion causes a cold sweat and makes the victim feel like he has been struck by hail. Although all her parallels (scholia, Galen, Dioscorides) are later than the *Theriaca*—and may therefore be based on them—her interpretation makes more sense than Gow & Scholfield's; cf. 252 and 778 n. On a different level the adj. may also refer to the star sign Scorpio as an omen of hail, as Gualandri (1978, 276–280) suggests (cf. Germ. frr. 4.61–65 and 127–128), preparing the reader for the catasterism in 19–20.

**κόρη Τιτηνίς:** Artemis. As a daughter of Leto, whose parents were the Titans Phoebe and Coeus, Artemis, although not a Titan herself, is still a Titan's granddaughter. As a personal name Τιτηνίς is used for the moon in A.R. 4.54,

whereas in Lyc. 231 it is part of a description of Thetys, and in Call. *Del.* 17 it is used as an adj. of Thetys as well. By itself it is not immediately clear who is meant and the reader has to deduce the identity of κόρη Τιτηνίς from the story of Orion in 13–20. One reason for Nic.'s vague description may be the possibility to make a connection with Τιτήνων in 10. Although the stories are not in any way related, the use of Τιτηνίς creates a transition from the first to the second myth by means of association, or rather pseudo-association, since the leap from the Titans to one of the Titans' granddaughters is rather forced. On pseudo-associative composition in Aratus and Nic. see Introduction 5.7.

14 **σκορπίον ἐκ κέντροιο τεθηγμένον:** after the spiders and snakes referred to in 8–9, Nic. introduces his last important category of poisonous creatures, emphatically placed in enjambment at the opening of the line (at the same time imitating *Phaen.* 643), by means of a second myth. For the introduction of the scorpion into the myth see 16 n. A κέντρον is a poisonous sting, a term also used for wasps and the like, and the sting-ray in 830.

15 **Βοιωτῷ … Ὠαρίωνι:** the *hyperbaton* is repeated in the next line: ἀχράντων … πέπλων. Framing an hexameter by a noun and an adj. in agreement is a stylistic device employed by several Hellenistic poets; see Introduction 6.8. As a metrical alternative Ὠαρίων is less common than the usual Ὠρίων, but still widely used (e.g. Pi. *N.* 2.12, Call. *Dian.* 265, Corinn. 662.2 *PMG*).

**16** The story of Orion and Artemis as related by Nic. gives us the impression that the hunter tried to rape the goddess, a version not expressed in the oldest version (*Od.* 5.121–124), but known from e.g. Hyginus (*Fab.* 14.11) and briefly hinted at in Call. *Dian.* 265. The combination of ἐδράξατο and πέπλων points toward some kind of sexual assault. A more elaborate version of the myth was recorded by Aratus in *Phaen.* 637–646. In this version Orion laid hands on Artemis while he was clearing Chios of its wild beasts (*Phaen.* 638–639), whereupon the goddess summoned a scorpion, freeing it by tearing open the hills of the island. According to Kidd (1997, 396–397) the myth of Orion and the scorpion is first recorded in the *Phaenomena*, but an earlier version of the story is recorded by the mythographer Palaephatus (probably second half fourth century BCE): συγκυνηγῶν δὲ οὗτος Ἀρτέμιδι ἐπεχείρησεν αὐτὴν βιάσασθαι· ὀργισθεῖσα δὲ ἡ θεὸς ἀνέδωκεν ἐκ τῆς γῆς σκορπίον, ὃς αὐτὸν πλήξας κατὰ τὸν ἀστράλαγον ἀπέκτεινε. Ζεὺς δὲ συνπαθήσας κατηστέρισεν αὐτόν (Palaeph. 51 *MG*). διὸ τοῦ Σκορπίου ἀνατέλλοντος ὁ Ὠρίων δύνει. ἡ ἱστορία παρὰ Εὐφορίωνι. This is in fact the scholion on Homer cited by Kidd (Σ D ad *Il.* 18.486 Van

Thiel = CA 101, p. 48), of which only the last two sentences are not copied from Palaephatus by the scholiast.

It is interesting that, according to ps.-Eratosthenes (*Catast.* 32 = 148a MW), the story of Orion was told by Hesiod, although ps.-Eratosthenes' version shows some dissimilarities, like the presence of both Artemis and Leto on Orion's hunting trips and Gaia as the goddess who sends Orion a huge scorpion. In this version it is Artemis and Leto who ultimately pray Zeus for the catasterism of Orion, in which case Nic. has created his own variant, based on Aratus. For Nicander's rendering results in a less sophisticated, yet darker version than Aratus', see Sistakou 2012, 200.

**ἀχράντων:** 'undefiled', especially in relation to virginity (cf. E. *IA* 1574, A.R. 4.1025, Mosch. *Eur.* 73). According to Campbell (1991, 78), commenting on Moschus' *Eur.* 73, "a decidedly sombre word!", probably pointing at the violent act of rape that the word recalls. The verb χραίνω expresses the defiling of a virgin, which is even more dramatic in relation to a virgin goddess. The placement of πέπλων at the end of the line (on which see also 15 n.) creates some suspense with regard to the object to which ἀχράντων corresponds.

**ἐδράξατο πέπλων:** a variation of Arat. 638, which tells us the exact same story but has ἑλκῆσαι πέπλοιο at the opening of the line. Nic. has exchanged the inf. for a finite verb, replaced the verb ἕλκω for the more dramatic δράττομαι, changed πέπλος into plur. and transferred both words to the end of the line in order to make the variation on Aratus as elaborate as possible. Another reference may be intended, as in Call. *Dian.* 76 we find ἐδράξαο in the same *sedes*. This time, however, it is Artemis herself who grasps, στήθεος ἐκ μεγάλου λασίης ἐδράξαο χαίτης, viz. the hairy breast of the cyclops Brontes, on whose lap she is sitting. The contrast between the child Artemis, innocently grasping the body of the mighty cyclops, and the grown-up virgin Artemis, who is violently grasped by a mighty warrior fits the context of Nic.'s dark poem, in which violence and violation of the human body are central; the reference to Callimachus' hymn serves to point at moments of bliss for which there is no room in Nic.'s world.

17 Towards the end of the proem the pace quickens, the last four lines consisting of dactyls only, except for the spondaic fifth foot of 20.

**στιβαροῖο:** apparently borrowed from Arat. 639 (στιβαρῇ … κορύνῃ) where it is used for the club with which Orion is hunting down the wild animals of Chios. Nic. employs it to describe Orion's strong foot, which, although not mentioned, is clear from the fact that the scorpion strikes Orion's ankle.

κατὰ σφυρόν: the only earlier instance of this combination in this *sedes* is A.R. 4.1647, where a description is given of Talos, the bronze guardian of Crete who wards off the Argonauts when they attempt to land the Argo. Like Achilles Talos is almost invulnerable, his only weak spot being a blood-filled vein just below his ankle, covered only by a thin membrane; cf. Hopkinson 1988, 196. Just like Talos, Orion is a mighty warrior of olden days and although he is not invulnerable like Talos he is struck on a critical spot, unable to ward off his assailant, mighty though he is. There is another parallel between the two, at least if we keep Aratus' version of Orion's story in mind: whereas Talos attempts to ward off all intruders from Crete, Orion is trying to clear Chios from all its denizens. Although the name of Chios is not named literally by Nic. (the context does not ask for it), the similarity could be picked up by the attentive reader. The only other instance of κατὰ σφυρόν in the same *sedes* is Q.S. 3.62, where Achilles is shot by Apollo.

18 The danger of a scorpion hiding under a stone seems to have been proverbial, e.g. ἐν παντὶ γάρ τοι σκορπίος φρουρεῖ λίθῳ (S. fr. 37 *TrGF*, from the play Αἰχμαλωτίδες), ὑπὸ παντὶ λίθῳ σκορπίον, ὦ ἑταῖρε, φυλάσσεο (Praxill. 750 *PMG*), ὑπὸ παντὶ λίθῳ καὶ βώλῳ πάσῃ σκορπίος ἐστί (Ael. *NA* 15.26). The normal λίθῳ, too common for Nic., is substituted by the more poetic λᾶι, which is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 16.739). In Homer λᾶι is used of a sharp (ὀξέϊ) stone used as a weapon with which Patroclus wounds Cebriones, the charioteer of Hector. The only other earlier instance is A.R. 4.1489 where the Argonaut Canthus is killed by a stone. In Nic., however, it is not the stone itself that is dangerous, but that what is hidden underneath. Nic. transposes the expected danger from the rock to the scorpion.

By making the scorpion hide itself under a small stone Nic. has reversed the exaggerated description of the story told by Aratus. In Palaeph. 51 *MG* the scorpion is summoned ἐκ τῆς γῆς by the goddess, whereas in Aratus, who probably knew this version of the story (cf. 16 n.), Artemis makes the scorpion come out of the earth, νήσου ἀναρρήξασα μέσας ἑκάτερθε κολώνας (642), "breaking open the centre of the island's hills to left and to right" (transl. Kidd); see Kidd 399–400 for Aratus' verbal echoes of earlier descriptions of earthquakes. Instead of adding even more violence to the description of the ruptured earth, Nic. downsizes both the scorpion and its hiding-place, exchanging monstrosity for a more realistic approach, and thereby adding to an impression of *real* danger; for Nic.'s veracious approach to myth see Introduction 8.2.

Schneider (1963, 108) points at the noticeable attention the poet pays to the rather pointless details in lines 17–18 (i.e. the exact part that was stung, the shelter of the scorpion), particularly when compared to the other digressions

in the *Theriaca*, which are mostly short and lacking in details; cf. Introduction 5.8. But the details in 18 are hardly irrelevant, since they hold a verbal echo of 2 (ἀπροϊδής) and add to the general sense of ubiquitous danger in a world in which scorpions may even be hiding under tiny rocks.

**σκορπίος:** this is the second time (cf. 14) we find this word at the opening of the line. Effe (1974b, 120) points at the fact that Aratus places the same word three times at line-opening (*Phaen.* 635, 643, 646) in his version of the Orion-story, and that Nic.'s repetition may well be intended as a verbal echo of his source.

**λᾶϊ:** masc. here, as in Homer, but in 45 λᾶας is fem. for a clear reason.

**19–20** The references to Aratus are obvious and summed up by Effe 1974b, 120. Not only do both authors tell the story of Orion, but they both do so in relation to his constellation. This is natural in Aratus' case, but Nic. has deliberately added these lines as a signal to the *Phaenomena*, while this connection is not necessary from Nic.'s point of view.

**19** **περίσημον:** 'very famous, notable' (LSJ), as a positive term, would refer to the glorious catasterism of Orion. Such an interpretation of the consacration of the famous hunter as a constellation would be odd, as it implies that Orion is rewarded; Σ D ad *Il.* 18.486 Van Thiel (= Euph. 65 Lightfoot; see 16 n.), however, taking the story from Euphorion, explains Orion's catasterism as an act of pity: Ζεὺς δὲ συμπαθήσας κατηστέρισεν αὐτόν. The more neutral 'conspicuous', as translated by Gow & Scholfield, seems more apt, referring to the physical brightness of the constellation; for the interpretation of περίσημος/περίσαμος as 'clearly distinguishible' cf. Mosch. 1.6, *AP* 12.96.3 (*HE* 3788).

We may wonder to what Orion owes his catasterism after his infamous assault on Artemis, yet it is significant that Nic. has added these two lines, since in a sense they weaken his point. We would expect a punishment of pain and suffering as a result of the scorpion's sting, not glorification of the victim, thereby reducing the impact of Nic.'s sinister description of the scorpion. The reason for the addition of the final two lines of the story is explained by Effe (1974b, 120), who interprets them as a way of establishing a connection with Aratus, who—although not mentioned by name like Hesiod—is introduced as Nic.'s second important source: references to Nic.'s literary sources are at least as important as the stories themselves. If we compare Nic.'s method of reference (i.e. one poet, Hesiod, is mentioned overtly, whereas the second, Aratus, is only alluded to) in this second part of the proem, to the references

in the first part (Hermesianax mentioned in 3, followed by a possible allusion to Antimachus, on which see 3 n.) we can see a parallel between the two parts of the proem.

**ἀπλανὲς αὔτως:** cf. ἀλλὰ μάλ' αὔτως (*Phaen.* 21) at line-end. Aratus' description of the celestial axis, not moving but forever holding the same position, closely resembles Orion's constellation in the *Theriaca*. This instance, added to the multiple references already noticed in lines 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 19 and 20, leaves little doubt about the intentionality and the importance of Aratus to Nic. as a literary predecessor.

**20** The second proem is rounded off, like the first, with an impressive four-word line, almost a three-word one, since the first word is appositive; see Magnelli 2002, 86–87. For the effect of such lines see Kidd 1997, 35 and Introduction 6.8. Moreover, the line shows a marked use of the Callimachean hexameter, viz. a spondaic fifth foot, combined with a four-syllable word (often a verb) at line-end, as in 12, 51, 60, 183, 206 and 231; the only exception in the *Theriaca* is 605. Such a combination of a spondaic fifth foot and a four-syllable closing word as a typical Hellenistic mannerism (Aratus, Euphorion, Eratosthenes, and the proto-Hellenistic Antimachus) is pointed out by Gutzwiller 2007, 37. In Nic. the contracted fifth foot is always preceded by a regular dactylic fourth foot; see West 1982, 154.

**οἷα κυνηλατέοντος:** 'as of a hunter'. This use of οἷα to describe the pose or resemblance of a character in a constellation is similar to *Phaen.* 252 and is used by Aratus throughout (45, 58, 63, 91, 183, 192 etc.) to enliven the constellations described; see Effe 1974b, 120. The verb κυνηλατέω ('follow the hounds', i.e. 'hunting') may well be a borrowing from Euphorion, as it does not occur elsewhere but very probably appeared in Euph. *CA* 132, p. 52 (= 133.5 Van Groningen = 128 Lightfoot = Σ *Ther.* 20b), though it is a supplement. Such borrowings from Euphorion are not hard to imagine, as according to Crates *AP* 11.218 (*HE* 1371–1374) his poetry was full of glosses, making him a forerunner of Nic. According to Cicero his poetry was 'excessively obscure' (*De div.* 2.64.132), but cf. Magnelli (2002 46–53) for a more nuanced view; see Introduction 6.5.

**ἀείδελον:** as a privative of *εἴδω the constellation is 'impossible to look at' because of its brightness. Its only pre-Hellenistic occurrence is in Hes. fr. 67 MW (36 Hirschberger), ὅττί κε χερσὶ λάβεσκεν ἀείδελα πάντα τίθεσκεν, where ἀείδελα occupies the same *sedes*. There the meaning of ἀείδελος is unmistakably

'invisible', as follows from the testimonium in MW. Nic., having found a very rare adj. in Hesiod, reuses the word in a new context here, thereby altering and re-interpreting its original meaning in a sophisticated and learned way. In *Ther.* 19, however, the same constellation is described as περίσημον, 'conspicuous', and therefore easy to distinguish, which implies that one *can* look at it. Through the combination of ἀείδελον and περίσημον here the contrast between Hesiod's original meaning ('invisible') and the interpretation following from Nic.'s use ('very visible') is increased; for this use of *oppositio in imitando* see Introduction 7.3.

**ἐστήρικται:** a final reference in support of Nic.'s allusion to Aratus' version of the Orion-story; see Effe 1974b, 120. ἐστήρικται is found four times at line-end (*Phaen.* 230, 274, 351, 500), used for star signs that have been set in a fixed shape or in a fixed relation to other constellations. Aratus may have had Hes. *Th.* 779 in mind; the same line-end is found in Call. *Ap.* 23.

## 21–156 General Precautions

After the proem Nic. starts straightaway with his subject matter by explaining which measures one must take to avoid being attacked by poisonous creatures. Lines 21–156 can be divided in:

| | |
|---|---|
| 21–34 | Likely snake haunts to avoid when sleeping outside |
| 35–56 | Producing repellent stench using fumigation |
| 57–79 | Producing repellent stench by collecting scented herbs |
| 80–97 | Preparation of a repellent unguent |
| 98–114 | Preparation of a second repellent unguent |
| 115–156 | How to avoid snake attacks when unprepared |

### *21–34 Likely Snake Haunts to Avoid When Sleeping Outside*

These 14 lines form an overwhelming single sentence. After the proem it is time to get to work, which is made clear by the amount of information passed on in this first sentence. It is not only the primal addressee who needs to be captured now that the poem really begins, the audience (the external addressee) needs to be attracted as well. As such, the poet seems to zoom out a little to include a wider audience (see Introduction 4.4). The poet's fluent start is cleverly chosen, by summing up all kinds of different places where one is likely to encounter poisonous snakes. Seven different locations are mentioned, through which the poet makes his audience aware of the danger lurking snakes constitute. The

audience is meant to get the impression, grasping the risks, that Nic.'s subject might turn out to be quite useful.

Apart from instilling a sense of usefulness the poet takes the opportunity to paint the general scenery of his poem verbally, using a rich palette of contrasts: heat/coolness (the stifling sun in 24 versus the shady water-meadows in 30), dryness/water (the dry summer heat in 24, the waterless hill in 26 versus the water-meadows in 30), terrain (crags in 22, hills in 24, vales in 26 and gullies in 28 versus plains in 23), cultivation (fields in 23, threshing floors in 29 versus woods in 27), vegetation (forest in 27, thickets in 28, straw in 25, fresh grass in 29), seasons (spring in 29–30, 32 versus summer in 24) and time (daytime in 24 versus nightfall in 25). Moreover, 21–29 function as an interesting parallel to the proem. In *Ther.* 4–6 three different types of rustic workmen are summed up (plougher, herdsman, woodcutter), each named as a person. In 21–29 we find complementary descriptions of the realms of these different rustics: farms/stables (21), fields for cultivation (23), woods (27–28), grazing land (28) and a threshing-floor (29). Despite the presence of a pleasantly described countryside, with water, shade, and places to rest, Nic.'s scenery is far from the Theocritean *locus amoenus*, which involves in addition the song of the cicada's, references to Pan and the nymphs, and often *eros*; cf. Schönberg 1962, 18–60, Hunter 1999, 12–14, and Overduin 2014. See also 472 n. and Introduction 8.2.

Although the poet appears to be eager to unfold how snakes can be dispelled it is striking that in these first 14 lines not a single method is put forward. Nic.'s claim ('you will easily chase and dispel all creeping things'), although expressed convincingly, is not substantiated until 35. In a way the poet has reversed the motif of the *recusatio*: instead of enumerating all the things he is not going to write about, the teacher assures his pupil that he will (get to know how to) chase reptiles, but in fact does not give a single method for 14 lines, and keeps delaying the actual description of the methods in question. The suspense thus created plays an important role in the way the poet has transformed a dull catalogue into a work of poetry.

**21** The only other instance of the combination Ἀλλὰ σύ γε before Nic. is *Il.* 13.294, ἀλλὰ σύ γε κλισίηνδε κιὼν ἕλευ ὄβριμον ἔγχος (same *sedes*), where Idomeneus urges Meriones to go and get a spear from his hut, after he has ended their conversation in the previous lines with the following words: ἀλλ' ἄγε, μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγώμεθα νηπύτιοι ὣς | ἑσταότες, μή πού τις ὑπερφιάλως νεμεσήσῃ (*Il.* 13.292–293). The idea conveyed by this context ('enough of this idle talk, let's do something useful') is basically the same as Nic.'s: it would imply that the myths referred to in the proem are just silly childish stories (νηπύτιοι ὥς) in

the eyes of the poet. As in line 8, ἀλλά is used to focus on a new topic, closing off the topic just dwelt on: after the mythological proem it is time to get back to reality.

**σύ γε:** the teacher addresses his pupil as if the mythological excursus in lines 8–20 was not only aimed at Hermesianax, but at the external addressee, viz. the poet's literary audience, as well. The information provided in the mythological excursus is hardly of any practical use to Hermesianax (although of interest to him too), whereas the reader is served in these lines with veiled viewpoints of Nic.'s poetics with regard to his literary sources (see Introduction 5.1–5.3). Now the poet needs to zoom in again on Hermesianax—who has evolved into a 'general you' (see Introduction 4.3) after the proem and is not mentioned again—and focus on the subject matter. The use of the emphatic personal pronoun gives us the impression that the poet wants to make up for his slight distraction in the previous lines and draws the attention of his pupil to start with the actual didactic part of his poem. It is noticable that Nic. uses σύ without γε only once (506), whereas σύ γε is used 16 times throughout the *Theriaca*. The particle γε is a so called scope-particle, defining the limits of the utterance: "they specify to whom/to what/in which case etc. the utterance applies"; Wakker 1996, 250. In the *Theriaca* this frequent combination of σύ and γε serves to emphasise the didactic relationship between the poet and the addressee, as it does here: 'No matter what I just said about the danger of poisonous beasts, *you at least* will know how to deal with them, if you listen to what I have to say'; see also 506 n.

**σταθμοῖο καὶ αὐλίου:** σταθμοῖο, with the epic ending -οιο, appears six times in Homer and once in *h.Ven.* 69, but is not used by any of the other Hellenistic poets. The exact interpretation is not clear: σταθμός can be used for farmstead (*Od.* 14.504, 12.304), stable (Hes. *Th.* 294, A.R. 2.1), sheepfold (A.R. 1.1246) or a combination of farm and fold/stable (*Il.* 5.140); αὔλιον usually refers to a (sheep)fold or a stable (*h.Merc.* 103, Call. fr. 25e.2 Harder = 27 Pf.) but in E. *Cyc.* 345 αὔλιον (said of Polyphemus' cave) can function both as a stable and a dwelling. Jacques' translates them as 'l' étable et … la bergerie', interpreting different kinds of stables, in the same vein as Touwaide's "del granero y del establo" (1997, 171), whereas Gow & Scholfield have "farmstead and cottage", referring to human dwellings. Bernsdorff's translation (2001, 187) "Stall und Hof" takes σταθμός to mean stable and αὔλιον farm. The combination of σταθμός and αὔλιον is only found in A.R. 2.142 (although 2.1 has σταθμοί and αὖλις) but this line does not make specifically clear what is referred to. If αὔλιον is a synonym for αὖλις (cf. *Ther.* 58) then Nic. is referring to structures or buildings as opposed

to accomodation out in the field, i.e. a 'camp'. But this interpretation, although plausible for Nic., contradicts the use of αὖλις in A.R. 2.1.

It is odd that Nic. starts his treatment of poisonous animals with instructions to dispel crawling creatures from structures, because throughout the poem, especially in lines 5–6 of the proem, mention is made only of the confrontation with snakes in the open.

**φύγδην:** adv. 'in flight', a unique form. Nic. has a liking for creating adv.'s in -ην: cf. ἀμμίγδην (41, 93, 912), συμφύρδην (110), λοχάδην (125), ποιφύγδην (371), ἐπιδρομάδην (481), συμμίγδην (677); see Introduction 6.2 and 6.10. In this preliminary section of precautions the pupil is instructed in the ways of dispelling and chasing snakes. The descriptions of individual snakes later on only allow for describing ways of escaping them. The genre of the *cynegetica* (also practiced by Nic.) is all but absent from the *Theriaca* as there is usually no question of hunting for snakes; the only exception is the *scytale* in 377–380, which is hunted for the curative powers of its skin. Otherwise the best one can hope to achieve is dispelling them before being attacked. This adds to the general sense of negativity that pervades the poem.

22 **ῥηΐδίως:** frequently used both by Homer and Hesiod, always as line-opening. Among Hellenistic poets this is only imitated by Apollonius (four times) and Nic. (here and in *Al.* 401), although later on it is favoured by the Oppian in his *Halieutica* (19× in the same *sedes*). Although different in form, there seems to be some correspondence with ῥεῖα in 1: initially it is the teacher who can do things 'easily', but if the pupil pays attention he will be able himself to dispel snakes 'easily'. Clauss (2006, 179–180) takes this remark at face value and underlines how easy it is to create a safe place for worry-free sleep. The overall tone of the poem is, however, much more gloomy: after Nic.'s section on precautionary measures (21–156) little relief is to be found in the gruesome descriptions of snake poisoning. The optimistic tone perceived by Clauss, reminiscent of the benign, caring, stoic Zeus in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, soon wears off, leaving the reader with desolation.

**ἐκ … διώξεαι:** *tmesis*. The separation between σταθμοῖο καὶ αὐλίου and the preverb by which the two nouns are governed is unusually large, adding to the complexity of this sentence, whichs spans lines 21–34. This is the only occurrence of the uncontracted form διώξεαι, apparently a fut. ind., although Σ *Ther.* 22a (ἀποδιώξεις; ἐκδιώξῃς) seems divided between a fut. ind. and an aor. subj. As in Homer, the distinction is small, as the fut. ind. points to future facts and the aor. subj. indicates an immediate future possibility.

**ἐρίπνης:** ‘broken cliff, crag’. It is not clear why broken cliffs deserve special attention. They seem a likely lurking-place for snakes (cf. the crags of Othrys in 145), but an unlikely abode for men. Gow & Scholfield’s translation “steep bank” makes more sense, but seems less accurate, since it is clear from A.R. 1.581 (Pelion) and 2.1247 (Caucasus) that the word is applied specifically to mountainsides. But the general idea of Nic.’s accumulation of places where one can be confronted with snakes is to give variation and to paint a verbal picture of the countryside, with vales, glens, mountains, water-meadows and hills. In addition Nic. probably adds this noun because of its curiosity, enjoying its rareness, as the only earlier instance in poetry of the noun used in sg. is A.R. 2.434 (ἄντρον ἐρίπνης at line-end, said of mount Dicte).

23 **αὐτοπόνοιο χαμευνάδος:** ‘a self-made bed’. χαμευνάς is used as an adj. in Lyc. 848, but here as a noun, adding variation to χάμευνη (Theoc. 13.33, A.R, 3.1193, 4.883) and χάμευνις (Theoc. 7.133), all short for χαμαιεύνη (cf. 532); see Introduction 6.10. αὐτοπόνος, probably a coinage, is only found here, explained in 25 as consisting of straw (ἐν καλάμῃ στορέσας).

23–24 **ἦμος ἀν’ ἀγρούς | … ἀϋτμήν:** the heat of summer in the fields is a common topic in poetry related to the countryside (cf. Hes. *Op.* 414–415, 575, 588, Theoc. 10.51, 12.9, Nic. *Ther.* 469–473). According to Bernsdorff (2001, 188) these lines, despite the fact that any mention of herds is lacking, employ the “Ruhemotiv”, typical of pastoral poetry, a motif repeated in 56. The use of ἦμος, a distinctly epic conjunction, with a subj. (εὕδῃς) and without ἄν is very rare. The only instances in early epic are *Od.* 4.400 and Hes. *Op.* 680, which may point at a deliberate imitation of this rarity; there is another instance in 830.

24 **πνιγόεσσαν ἀϋτμήν:** ‘stifling heat’. ἀϋτμή usually refers to breath (e.g. *Il.* 9.609, 10.89), but the association with heat is already clear in *Od.* 16.290 (πυρός … ἀϋτμή), *Il.* 21.366–367 (ἀϋτμή | Ἡφαίστοιο, describing heat), 9.389 (where it is said of the scorching heat emitted by the burnt eye of Polyphemus) and A.R. 1.734 (πυρὸς ζείουσαν ἀϋτμήν, at line-end). The combination of πνίγω with regard to hot weather is also found in Ar. *Av.* 726 and 1091, and in Hp. *Aër.* 15.19. The reading πυρόεσσαν, preferred by Gow & Scholfield, is not used elsewhere to qualify the heat of summer, although ‘fiery heat’ makes good sense. Whether πνιγόεσσαν or πυρόεσσαν is preferred, the adj. gives an added sense of sluggishness and presents the heat (already qualified by αὐαλέου θέρεος) as even more unbearable. Such a depiction adds to the contrast between inert human beings and fast and energetic animals: in the natural world, where the animal rules, man is an intruder or a passer-by.

25 **ἀκρέσπερος:** 'at nightfall' or 'on the edge of evening' (cf. Theoc. 24.77). This is hard to reconcile with the previous lines, where the reason given for making a bed out in the open is to shun the heat of summer, implying a sort of siesta in the shade. If Nic. is referring to sleeping outside at nighttime, when the sun has gone, we would expect φεύγων in 24 to be an aor., meaning 'having escaped' i.e. 'having endured the heat until the evening', instead of the pres. part., which translates as 'shunning'. Moreover, if Nic. is talking about sleeping outside to escape the heat trapped inside one's house, we would not expect to find such clear references to the countryside (ἀν' ἀγρούς in 23, ἐν καλάμῃ in 25).

The necessity of clearing one's sleeping ground of snakes, although obvious, adds to an impression of usefulness (cf. Magnelli 2010, 221–222): the external addressee, although perhaps not quite convinced, is shown the practical advantages of a poem on snakebites. At the same time, however, the external addressee must have consisted of educated elitist readers, who were not very likely to encounter dangerous animals in the field in the first place. Although this situation must have been clear to the poet from the start, in order to play the literary game by the rules the impression of usefulness must be maintained throughout the poem in order to be convincing.

26 **ἐνὶ βήσσῃς:** this combination at line-end occurs only in A.R. 1.126 (Nic. *Al.* 40 has ἐνὶ βήσσῃ): τὴν ὁδὸν ᾗ ζωὸν φέρε κάπριον ὅς ῥ' ἐνὶ βήσσῃς | φέρβετο. In Apollonius, however, it is a different kind of dangerous creature (the Erymanthian boar) that haunts the glens. White (1987, 8) points at a poetic plur. here, but the poet's choice for the plur. seems to be inspired by the reference to Apollonius, rather than by his preference for a poetic plur. as an aesthetic utterance per se.

27 **ἐσχατίην … ὕλην:** the mss reading ἐσχατιήν (instead of ἐσχατιῇ, proposed by Schneider and followed by Gow & Scholfield), defended by White (1987, 8) and accepted by Jacques and Spatafora, produces another case of a noun and an adj. in agreement framing an hexameter; see Introduction 6.8.

**κινώπετα:** first used in Call. *Jov.* 25. Nic., eager to adopt this poetic synonym of ἑρπετά, uses it again in 195 and 488, always in the sames *sedes*, following Call. McLennan (1977, 56) points at the difference, according to ancient opinion, between κινώπετα (used for land serpents) and κνώδαλα (mainly used for sea serpents, as in *Al.* 391 and 504, although sometimes applied to land serpents as well), implying that Callimachus' choice for κινώπετα in *Jov.* 25 is chosen carefully. If this is right Nic.'s choice for κινώπετα may be prompted by

Call.'s consideration that dry locations (such as ὕλη here) foster κινώπετα rather than the more general κνώδαλα.

28 This line, suspected by Gow & Scholfield (following Schneider), partly because of its repetition in 489, but restored by Jacques, adds three more probable snake haunts. The poetic value of this line lies mainly in its addition of more variation to the vivid description of the scenery described in 21–34. The forest (ὕλη) mentioned in 27 is followed by two kinds of thicket and by gullies; cf. 21–34 n.

**δρυμοὺς καὶ λασιῶνας:** 'thickets', 'overgrowth'. λασιών, obviously derived from λάσιος seems to be a poetic coinage of Nic., but [Theoc.] 25.134–135 (ἐκ λασίοιο … δρυμοῖο) implies that λασιών and δρυμός mean virtually the same. δρυμούς (frequent in a bucolic context, cf. Theoc. 1.72, 117; 3.16, 13.16, 67; 20.36) is aptly chosen for animals darting through the woods (cf. *Il.* 11.118 of a running deer, Theoc. 1.72 of a lion and [Theoc.] 25.134 of beasts).

**ἀμορβαίους τε χαράδρας:** according to the scholia ἀμορβαῖος means 'rustic'/'pastoral', or 'dark' (Σ *Ther.* 28a); see also Hollis (2009, 260–261) on *Hec.* fr. 76. H. Considering the fact that Nic. aims at depicting the more desert side of nature (next to cultivated area's such as farmsteads, stables, fields and threshing floors) 'dark' is apt. Another possibility (proposed by Jacques) is 'frequented by shepherds', which adds the aspect of pasture land to the description of the area; see 21–34 n.

29 **λιστρωτὸν ἅλω δρόμον:** by proceeding to the 'levelled' (λιστρωτός, only here; see Spanoudakis 2006, 50) threshing-floor the poet rounds off his short scenic tour. Starting close to home (farmstead and stable in 21) the poet has shown us crags (22), farmers' fields (23), hills, glens (26), woods (27), copses, gullies (28) and finally a threshing-floor, returning close to the farm.

**ποίη:** apparently 'grass' here, but see 497 n.

30 **ἰάμνους:** 'river-side meadows'. Spatafora (2007a, 100) points at the technical use of the word for the natural geography of the Egyptian delta, but Nic.'s use does not require such a narrow interpretation, although the word does seem to be technical rather than poetical. The rare ἴαμνοι (only plur.), among poets only used by Nic. (apart from an imitation in Nonn. *D.* 12.315), is short for ἰαμενή, which, according to Hesychius, is a late form of εἰαμενή/εἰαμενή. This is, however, not the only instance of Nic. changing the gender of a noun according to

his taste (see Introduction 6.9). εἰαμενή (only in *Il.* 4.483 and 15.631) is one of the many rare Homeric words picked up by the Alexandrians (cf. Call. *Dian.* 193, [Theoc.] 25.16, A.R. 2.795, 818; 3.1202, 1220; 4.316, Euph. *CA* 138, p. 53 = 139 Van Groningen = 135 Lightfoot). But Aelius Herodianus, quoting Strabo, writes ὅτι ἰάμνους ἐκάλουν τοὺς καθύγρους καὶ τεθηλότας τόπους (*De prosodia catholica* 3,1.248.17) which means that the masc. variant was known outside poetry as well, at least in later times.

**31 ἀζαλέων φολίδων ἀπεδύσατο γῆρας:** 'takes off the old age of withered scales'. Jacques' reading ἀζαλέον (varying on αὐαλέον as conjectured by Bentley) is unnecessary, cf. 221 ἀζαλέαις … φολίδεσσι and A.R. 4.144 ἀζαλέῃσιν … φολίδεσσιν; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 100. Although seemingly a poetic expression, γῆρας, referring to the slough of a snake, is also found in Aristotle (*HA* 549b26, 600b15). The casting of snake skins, one of the more fascinating aspects of snake biology, is mentioned again briefly in 137; a third reference is found in 358, where an aetiology explains in detail the phenomenon described here. The phrasing is similar to Call. fr. 1.33–35 Harder, where we read about a cicada taking off its withered slough, ἵνα γῆρας … ἐκδύοιμι. There the aforementioned double quality of γῆρας—doffing both old skin and old age—is particularly relevant, as the poet tells us of his wish to become a cicada and take off his γῆρας, which lies as a heavy burden upon him.

**γῆρας:** Nic. probably found this technical use of the noun for a withered snake's slough in Arist. *HA* 549b26 or a similar treatise. The idea, however, of old age being considered something material that can be taken off, is clearly expressed in *h.Cer.* 276, γῆρας ἀπωσαμένη, where Demeter takes of her disguise of an old woman; cf. *h.Ven.* 224, ξῦσαί τ' ἄπο γῆρας ὀλοιόν, *Il.* 9.446, γῆρας ἀποξύσας, *Nostoi* fr. 6 *PEG* (*EGF* 7), and Ar. *Pax* 336, τὸ γῆρας ἐκδύς.

**32 μῶλυς ἐπιστείβων:** although the description starts with a quite harmless portrayal of a snake—it moves feebly and has weak sight (ὄμμασιν ἀμβλώσσει in 33), having shed its slough after a period of hibernation—the creature has regained swiftness and sharp sight within two lines. The ease with which snakes regain full strength after having cast their slough underlines their portrayed superiority to man, whose vulnerability is brought up time and again in the *Theriaca*. Part of the tension in the poem is built on the struggle between man and beast, with snakes being depicted as powerful hostile enemies instead of natural phenomena; see Introduction 8.1.

ἐπιστείβων is a rare compound, adding a poetic touch to something as humble as the crawling of a reptile. This is not the only instance of a poetic portrayal

of a particularly low subject matter (cf. 5 n. on ὀροιτύπος) in Hellenistic poetry. The verb ἐπιστείβω in the three earlier instances found (S. *OC* 56, Call. *Del.* 277, Rhian. *CA* 1.1, p. 9) seems to express a marked use of treading, with a sense of awareness of the place that foot is set upon. Here such an additional meaning is absent; the poet simply chose the compound for its rareness and for its poetic ring, which contrasts with the low act it refers to; cf. 570, where Nic. uses the same compound for a hippopotamus trampling fresh plants, thus deflating the lofty tone the verb bears in earlier instances.

**ὅτε φωλεὸν εἴαρι φεύγων:** the parallel with 24, φεύγων αὐαλέου θέρεος πυρόεσσαν ἀϋτμήν, is clear and well-chosen, with as variation φεύγων here at line-end (opening the line in 24) and a variation in the cases of the seasons (εἴαρι, θέρεος). Whereas men are eager to escape the heat of the sun in 24 to seek shelter, the snake in 32 is leaving the shelter of the den in which it has hibernated to go outside and regain strength from the sun.

**33 ὄμμασιν ἀμβλώσσει:** the absent (or at least very weak) sight of the snake is either due to the cold during hibernation (Σ *Ther.* 32d, ὑπὸ τοῦ παγετοῦ), or to their lengthy recess in dark places (Ael. *NA* 9.16); see Spatafora 2007a, 101.

**μαράθου:** see 391 n.

**ἑ:** an archaic personal pronoun, rarely found in tragedy, comedy or classical historiography, although used a few times by Plato. Several Alexandrian poets, keen on reviving Homeric words and forms, use it quite often, notably Apollonius (18 times), whereas it is not found in Theocritus, who is generally less concerned with such learning or perhaps considered it inappropriate for his subject; cf. Call. *SH* 265.20, 279A.2, Euph. *SH* 414.7, *CA* 58.2, p. 41 (63 Van Groningen), Numen. *SH* 591.3, Eratost. *CA* 16.7, p. 62, Alex. Aet. *CA* 3.13, p. 122, adesp. *SH* 1014. This is the only time Nic. uses this form, maybe just to show that, like the early Alexandrians, he knows not only his Homeric vocabulary, but also how to play their game. Like his Alexandrian predecessors, Nic. shows himself aware of the fact that, just like in Homer, a vowel before ἑ is not metrically problematic, as the hiatus was originally absent because of a digamma.

**νήχυτος:** 'abundant', a compound of the supposedly intensive prefix νη- and χέω. Apparently it was coined by Philitas, who has νήχυτον ὕδωρ (*CA* 21, p. 94 = 6 Spanoudakis = 24 Sbardella) see Spanoudakis 2002, 154–155. A.R. 3.530 is most likely an imitation of Philitas, whereas 4.1367 has the variation νήχυτον ἅλμην at line-end, referring to the abundant spray of seawater. In Call. *Hec.* fr. 11 H.

(236.3 Pf.) it is applied to εὐρώς ('mould' caused by heavy rain), whereas in Nic. *Al.* 587 it is found with ἱδρώς. Triphiodorus, who understood that νήχυτος can be applied to any kind of liquid has νήχυτον αἷμα (Triph. 229), while Quintus abandoned the element of flowing altogether (νήχυτος ἀήρ, Q.S. 1.417). It is always used in the same *sedes* (though one cannot be sure in *CA* 21, p. 94 owing to the lack of metrical context). Here it is used with ὅρπηξ ('sapling'), giving it a particularly fresh ring, depicting the plant's juice as abundantly flowing, even though this is not visible to the eye as in other cases of νήχυτος.

34 **αὐγήεντα:** 'bright-eyed', 'clear-sighted'. Another possible coinage of Nic., who displays his liking for creating adj.'s in -(ό)εις in plenty of other words as well; see Introduction 6.2. For a possible connection to Antimachus, who shows a similar liking see Matthews 1996, 52. If Nic. is really an emulator of Antimachus (on which see 3 n.), this seems to be one of the latter's characteristic features followed by Nic.

### *35–56 Producing Repellent Stench: Fumigation*

After the account of possible locations for snakehaunts in 21–34 the poet ostensibly proceeds to the practicalities of snake expulsion. The first remedy is fumigation, a method to dispel lurking snakes with the stench of smoke. Several ingredients are mentioned, but it is not clear whether these are specifically needed, or whether they just produce thick and pungent smoke; for the ancient practice of fumigation see Jacques 2002, 81–84.

35 **θιβρήν:** 'warm'. An Alexandrian word, elsewhere only used in Call. fr. 654 Pf. (θιβρῆς Κύπριδος ἁρμονίης), Euph. *CA* 81, p. 44 = 46 Van Groningen = 115 Lightfoot (Θιβρήν τε Σεμίραμιν), both known from the scholia (Σ *Ther.* 35a), and *Al.* 555 (ὤεα θιβρὰ χελύνης). It is impossible to decide which poet is imitated here, but that either Callimachus or Euphorion was the source here is probable; see Magnelli 2002, 105. The fact that the contexts of both Callimachus' and Euphorion's instance is quite different from Nic.'s use here need not disqualify either of them: reusing rare words taken from more elevated contexts in a distinctly common way seems to be typical of Nic.'s way of dealing with previous occurrences of Alexandrian vocabulary; see Introduction 7.3.

**ὀφίων:** although the subject of the poem is clear from the start this is the first time ὄφις, the common word for snake, is used.

**ἐπιλωβέα:** probably a Nicandrean invention; only here and in 771, on which see n.

**36 καπνείων ... κεραίην:** burning a stag's horn as a means of producing smoke as a repellent for snakes is confirmed by Aelian (*NA* 9.20) and many others; see Spatafora 2007a, 102–103. Nic., however, seems to be their main source.

**πολυγλώχινα:** 'with many tines', apparently a coinage of Nic., varying on earlier forms like τανυγλώχις ('with a long point' of arrows in *Il.* 8.297, imitated by Simonides in *AP* 7.443.1), χαλκογλώχινος ('bronze-barbed' of a spear in *Il.* 22.225) and, more recent, τριγλώχις (Call. fr. 1.36 Harder, on which see Massimilla 1996, 228; *Del.* 31, on which see Mineur 1984, 78–79). The many barbs referred to here are the tines of a stag's antlers. πολυσχιδής is the word used by Aristotle (*HA* 517a24) for the branching of antlers, but Nic., always keen on variation, chooses to save this word until 39, where it is applied to the cloven shape of fern leaves (πολυσχιδέος βλήτρου ... χαίτην); for Nic.'s use of *variatio* see Introduction 6.10.

**37 ἄλλοτε:** 'or'. In the *Theriaca* ἄλλοτε is sometimes practically a synonym of ἤ, as the temporal element is virtually absent here, as in e.g. 43–44, 82, 236, 534–535, 558, 839, 872. In a didactic poem that largely consists of catalogue-passages such synonyms for 'or' are necessary to limit undesirable repetition and function as part of the poetic diction, particularly in a poet so markedly striving for *variatio*. This does, however, not rule out the normal use of ἄλλοτε in other lines of the *Theriaca*; cf. Introduction 6.9 and 6.10.

**ἐγγαγίδα πέτρην:** also known as Γαγάτης λίθος, 'the rock of Gagai' (referring to either the river Γάγης or the town Γάγαι on the south coast of Lycia) is a kind of pitchy lignite or wood-coal; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 171; Jacques 2002, 83–84; Spatafora 2007a, 103; Introduction 8.6.

**39 βλήτρου:** βλῆτρον here is not a 'fastening band', as in *Il.* 15.678 (where βλήτροισι is a *hapax legomenon*), but a variant of βλῆχνον/βλῆχρον, the 'male fern'; details in Spatafora 2007a, 103.

**40 καχρυόεσσαν:** only here; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2. The κάχρυς is the fruit (in the shape of grains) of the λιβανωτίς (rosemary frankincense), mentioned in 850; see Spatafora 2007a, 103.

**41 ἀμμίγδην:** another Nicandrean coinage (for metrical reasons), used here, in 93, 912 and in *Al.* 134 and 557, but not found elsewhere. The variant ἄμμιγα, used by Apollonius, Theocritus and Hermesianax of Colophon, is more common in Nic. (6× in the *Theriaca*, 5× in the *Alexipharmaca*). A third metrical

variant (ἀνάμιγδα) occurs in *Al.* 547, while συμμίγδην is found in 677; cf. Introduction 6.4 and 6.10.

**ἔνοδμον:** 'pungent', 'strong-smelling'. One of Nic.'s composite adj.'s of scent; cf. βαρυαής (43), βαρύπνοος (76, *Al.* 338), βαρυώδης (895), βαρύοδμος (51). Many of Nic.'s descriptions use sensory elements to enliven his subject and to bring the sensations at issue closer to his audience, rather than to make identification easier.

42 **ζορκός:** see 142 n.

**ἀσκελές:** 'evenly', like ἰσοσκελής, pointing at a balance with even legs as used for taking measures. Cf., however, ἀσκελές in 278, where a different meaning is picked from Homer, who uses ἀσκελής as meaning either 'very hard', or 'tough, stubbornly' in *Il.* 19.68, *Od.* 1.68, 4.543, and 10.463. Interestingly, both here and in 278 Nic. follows the Homeric *sedes*.

43 **βαρυαέος:** 'strong-smelling'. The addition of epithets to plants not only adds to the poetic dimension of the *Theriaca*, but also seems to function as a showcase for lexical creativity. Among the many coinages by Nic. many compounds are devoted to plants, e.g. βαρύοδμος (51), βαρυαής (43), πολυαυξής (73, 596), βαρύπνοος (76, *Al.* 338), πολύγουνος (872), πολύχνοος (875), βαρυώδης (895), παναλθής (939) and νεωρυχής (940). Although Nic. could have contented himself with plainly enumerating the ingredients needed, which would be sufficient for his didactic purpose, his countless lexical innovations make clear that his didactic agenda is not the main thing on his mind; see Introduction 6.2.

**45–50** After the lignite in 37–38, the 'Thracian stone' is the second stone with special properties, to which six lines are given. Among Hellenistic authors poetry devoted to the unusual properties of certain types of stones is not uncommon, as is clear from the 20 epigrams of the 'Lithika' section of the Milan Posidippus papyrus (1–20). The sources for such poetry were probably of a technical nature, such as Theophrastus' *De lapidibus* and the *Mirabilia* of Aristotle; see Smith 2004, 105–117 and Introduction 8.6.

45 **Θρήϊσσαν ... λᾶαν:** fem. here, but masc. in 18, as in Homer. Murray (1997, 113), commenting on Socrates' use of the image of the magnetic powers of the Thracian stone in Plato's *Ion*, points out that λίθος is fem. when used of a special kind of stone, which is clearly applicable to a stone with magnetic

qualities. This seems to explain Nic.'s assumed inconsistency perfectly, as he has exchanged λίθος for a more poetic synonym. Apart from Pl. *Ion* 533d the Thracian stone and its properties are known from ps.-Aristotle (*Mir*. 841a21ff.); Aelian quotes Nic. as his source (*HA* 9.20) when describing this stone and its nature, whereas Galen cites *Ther*. 45–49 freely in *Mixt*. 12.204; see also Spatafora 2007a, 105, and Introduction 8.6.

**ἐνιφλέξαις:** an imperat. opt. ἐνιφλέγω is epic for ἐμφλέγω, which is used in 338, where the metre constricts the use of the epic variant. Here both ἐνιφλέγω and ἐμφλέγω are metrically possibly, but the more poetical variant is preferred by the poet. For the varying forms of address see Introduction 6.10.

46–47 **ἤ θ' ὕδατι … | … ἐλαίου:** another reflection of the poet's interest in the properties of special stones. For Nic.'s purpose the special reaction of this particular stone to water is irrelevant, as is the way it quenches its glow when exposed to oil, since only the snake repelling scent it disperses when exposed to fire is of use here. Yet phenomena like these offer the poet an opportunity to pay attention to the marvels of nature and to focus the audience's attention on his learning. The use of ὀδμήσαιτο is striking: Nic.'s personifying attempt to present even a rock as being able to actually smell something adds to the general idea that nature is alive and not just the setting of his poem. It also reflects Nic.'s interest in vivid descriptions of sensory and bodily reactions, even when it comes to stones. For the motif of personification in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.1.

46 **αὐγήν:** both Gow & Scholfield and Jacques prefer Bernard's emendation αὐγήν ('brightness') το αὐτήν, as transmitted in the mss. The latter, defended by White (1987, 10) and Touwaide (1997, 289), makes less sense, as it cannot be reflexive here ('extinguishes itself'), which would require αὑτήν instead. As Spatafora (2007a, 105) points out, both words are of course very similar when read in a capital manuscript, viz. ΑΥΓΗΝ ~ ΑΥΤΗΝ.

48 **νομέες:** although the story of the Thracian stone is known from Aristotle, it seems to be Nic.'s own addition that the stone is collected from the river Pontus in Thrace by herdsmen, for which he uses the word νομεύς here; cf. 5 n.

49 **ἀμορβοί:** 'herdsmen'. Despite the rarity of the noun the meaning of the gloss is clear from νομέες and the subsequent μήλοισον … ἕπονται; see Spatafora 2007a, 105. It is not clear whether Nic. makes a distinction between the νομέες in 48 and the ἀμορβοί here, although the latter may refer specifically to shepherds,

considering the adj. κριόφαγος in the next line. Perhaps Nic. is thinking of transhumance, with the νομέες as herdsmen from the south going up north to Thrace to graze and returning to the south, having collected objects like the singular stones in question. If the synonyms have just been chosen for the sake of *variatio* (see Introduction 6.10.), the pupil is left wondering how such a stone can be obtained. ἀμορβός and its cognates are rarely found outside Hellenistic poetry, the only two instances in poetry being [Opp.] *C.* 1.132 and 3.295. The basic meaning of ἀμορβέω is 'to follow', 'to attend' as follows from Antim. fr. 28 Matthews (= Wyss). In Call. *Dian.* 45 ἀμορβούς (at line-end) are attendants, but in *Hec.* fr. 117 H. (301 Pf.) it is clear that ἀμορβοί (again at line-end) are herdsmen; cf. Krevans 1993, 153 and Hollis 2009, 260–261 and 303–304. The plur. noun ἀμορβοί may have been used by Homer (*Il.* 13.793, οἵ ῥ' ἐξ Ἀσκανίης ἐριβώλακος ἦλθον ἀμορβοί) if the conjecture by Nauck is accepted, although it would be replacing one *hapax legomenon* (ἀμοιβοί) with another; see Matthews 1996, 135.

**50 κριοφάγοι:** 'eating ram's flesh'. A unique coinage, varying on earlier compounds as βουφάγος, ἰχθυοφάγος, ὀψοφάγος, ὠμοφάγος. Could a pun (κριθοφάγοι, not attested) be intended? Spatafora (2007a, 105) suggests κριοφάγος is based on the Homeric γλακτοφάγος which occurs in *Il.* 13.6 (not γ<u>α</u>λακτοφάγος, and not in *Il.* 13.49 as Spatafora erroneously states).

**ἀεργηλοῖσιν:** ἀεργηλός is apparently a poetic lengthening of ἀεργός, 'idle'. A.R. 4.1186, which has ἀεργηλήν, said of a πόρτιν ('heifer') may have inspired Nic.'s combination of slow cattle; see Livrea 1973a, 334. Otherwise the word is rare, the only possibly earlier appearance being in a lyric fragment, where it qualifies sleep (*Lyr. Adesp.* fr. 78.1.1 PMG). The sluggishness of this line, consisting of only four words, conveys the contents of ἀεργηλοῖσιν ('leisurely') well; for the poet's liking for *versus tetracoli* see Introduction 6.8. According to Bernsdorff (2001, 188) μήλοισιν ἀεργηλοῖσιν is a functional elaboration, similar to *Ther.* 471–473, but such a functional purpose is not clear here.

**51 ναὶ μήν:** 'indeed', a favourite line-opening of Nic., used again in *Ther.* 66, 76, 145, 334, 520, 822, 863, 896, 921, and *Al.* 64, 178, 554 and 584. The only other instance of this combination in Hellenistic poetry is Arat. 450 (Theoc. 27.27 has ναὶ μάν), whereas the only earlier instance in Greek poetry is Emp. fr. 76.10 DK, which does not seem to be of any influence here. ναί is generally used to express strong affirmation, often in reply (cf. *Il.* 1.286, 8.146, 10.169, *Od.* 4.266, 20.37, Theoc. 27.27, Call. *AP* 12.148.4 (*HE* 1074 = 32 Pf.), A.R. 4.1073). In Nic.'s case ναί seems to be an excited assurance of the teacher's own knowledge. One gets

the impression the teacher is speaking to himself no less than to his addressee and the use of ναὶ μήν can hardly be said to answer an anticipated question of the addressee. Nic.'s remarkably frequent use of ναὶ μήν is characteristic of his decisiveness and perhaps even of his self-satisfaction in matters of obscure learning.

According to Hopkinson (1988, 144) "Nic. often uses these words simply as a mark of transition to a new topic" (cf. Spatafora 2007a, 105), but in e.g. 66, 76 and 896 there is not such a clear transition to a new topic, as these lines are part of lists in which new plants are enumerated throughout, which can hardly be defined as the introduction of a new topic. Schmitt (1969, 65–66) makes the same point: "ναὶ μὴν καί findet sich zahlreich bei späten Epikern beim Übergang zu einem neuen Gedanken […]", but even the addition of καί (the Nicandrean collocation of the three particles is unprecedented) does not stand up in the case of e.g. 896. In didactic epic it works well for the five instances of Oppian's *Halieutica*, but only for one of the three instances in Dionysius Periegetes. For Nic.'s use of ναὶ μήν to create the illusion of associative composition see Introduction 5.7.

**ζωγρηθεῖσα:** 'brought to life'. The verb is mainly used for 'taking people alive', but in *Il.* 5.698 ζώγρει is used of the breath of the North Wind keeping the dying Sarpedon alive (*LfgrE* s.v. ζωγρέω). It is this rare second meaning that Nic. applies to the juice of all-heal here (χαλβάνη in 52) which 'comes to life' (i.e. starts giving a repellent stench) when exposed to a flame. This is one of the relatively few spondaic lines in the *Theriaca*; see Introduction 6.11 and 20 n.

52–53 **ἢ πριόνεσσι … | … καταψηχθεῖσα γενείοις:** the image of the cedar ground to dust recalls the woodcutter in the proem, but whereas in *Ther.* 5 he is portrayed as a defenceless victim, here we see the first sign of a woodcutter who can at least defend himself precautionarily.

53 **πουλυόδουσι:** only here, except for four imitations (all in the same *sedes*) by Nonnus, who must have picked up the word from this line. The use of the epic/Ionic πουλυ- instead of πολυ- is one of the many ways in which Nic. attempts to add an epic dimension to the vocabulary of the *Theriaca*, although its use here is primarily *metri causa*. Nic. extends the artificiality of the already hybrid epic language of Homer even further by creating pseudo-Ionic words, like he does here. The presentation of an ordinary tool as a saw (πριόνεσσι in 52) as having 'many-toothed jaws' is striking in a poem about dangerous beasts, some of which are equiped with such natural tools themselves if we are to believe Nic.'s description of the dragon in *Ther.* 441–442. The poet's focus on

the danger of biting and teeth seems to have affected this description as well, adding to the general feeling of danger that pervades the poem.

54 **ἐν φλογιῇ:** φλογιή, a metrically suitable cognate variant of φλόξ (which Nic. used in 51), also appears in *Al.* 393, 534 and 586; for Nic.'s use of *variatio* see Introduction 6.10.

**καπνηλόν:** 'smoky', another Nicandrean *hapax legomenon*: see Introduction 6.4. For the masc. ending, qualifying the fem. noun ὀδμήν cf. 120, 172 and 335 and Introduction 6.9. καπνηλόν and ὀδμήν form a *hypallage*, as the process of heating produces smoke, repellent because of its stench, rather than stench that produces smoke.

**φύξιμον ὀδμήν:** 'repellent stench', most likely an imitation of φύξιμος ὀδμή (Simon. 133 *PMG*), the only other instance of the meaning 'causing to flee' instead of 'wither one can flee' and 'which one can escape' (cf. LSJ I and II.1). There might be a relation to Φύξιος, an epithet of Zeus 'who puts to flight'; cf. Lyc. 288, A.R. 2.1147 and 4.119. If this relation is intentional this is another example of the poet's down-to-earth approach of his subject: in his world there is no need for Muses or gods who come to the rescue; cf. 1 n. Not only does Nic. refrain from appealing to gods or Muses for poetic inspiration when it comes to his task of writing a didactic-epic poem, but he also shows that he can do without a specific appeal to Zeus Φύξιος in his capacity of dispeller: the poet can rely on his own knowledge to dispel snakes, as he knows how to put plants to use to perform the role of Φύξιος.

55–56 **οἷς δή … | … ὕπνοιο κορέσσῃ:** these two last verses round off the passage on expelling snakes by recapturing the topic of 23–25, where clearing the area of snakes when one needs to sleep out in the open gave occasion to the treatment of the method of fumigation.

55 **χηραμά:** 'cleft', a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (χηραμόν in *Il.* 21.495), used as a synonym for κοίλην πέτρην in 21.494. In Homer the gender is undetermined, as in Lyc. 181. In A.R. 4.1452 it is fem. (with the adj. στεινήν), but in later writers (e.g. Ael. *NA* 3.26) it is masc. Nic. uses the heteroclite plur. χηραμά, perhaps as an indication of his awareness of the undetermined gender in Homer and the solution chosen by Apollonius. Such an alternative on Nic.'s side would be a typical example of the kind of scholarly pedantry some of the earlier Alexandrian grammarians were concerned with. The adj. κοῖλα, although a redundant pleonasm as regards content, supports the chiasmus in this verse. Lyc. 181–182

comes close to the procedure Nic. is describing here: σφῆκας δαφοινοὺς χηραμῶν ἀνειρύσας, | ὁποῖα κοῦρος δῶμα κινήσας καπνῷ ("drawing bloodthirsty wasps out of their clefts, like to a boy who stirs a nest with smoke"; transl. Mooney).

**ὑληώρεας:** only here, as an adj. of a forest. Regular adj.'s such as ὑλήεις and ὑλώδης are avoided as usual by the poet and substituted with metrically convenient and more original coinages.

**56 κεινώσεις:** although the lengthening of -ε- to -ει- for metrical purposes is common in epic diction, κεινόω does not occur in Homer. The fut. ind. expresses the poet's confidence in the effectivity of his methods: when his instructions will be carried out properly there is no risk in sleeping in the woods at night as clefts and couches in the forest will be clear.

**ὕπνοιο κορέσσῃ:** *Il.* 13.636 (πάντων μὲν κόρος ἐστὶ, καὶ ὕπνου καὶ φιλότητος) seems to be the only previous instance of this phrasing in poetry. There is an interesting contrast between the snake, which regains its strength easily after a long sleep in the winter (31–34), and man, who needs to take elaborate measures just to be able to go to sleep safely (35–56). See 23–25 n.

### *57–79 Producing Repellent Stench By Collecting Scented Herbs*

In the following section the poet offers an alternative to the method of fumigation just expounded. As before, the addressee should make use of repellent stench to chase off snakes, but now he should do so by collecting plants and herbs that produce enough stench by themselves, without the need to stimulate them over fire first. The fact that these lines form a complementary part to lines 21–56 is made clear by the frame constituted by the element of sleeping outside. Whereas the first part starts (21–25) and ends (56) with sleeping outside, the complementary part does the same, with 57–58 and 78 providing a second frame. See also Introduction 5.6.

Although the passage seems to be primarily a plain catalogue of ingredients, Nic. has enriched the bland enumeration by several poetical elaborations. In 59–62 the ingredient mint is not simply mentioned, but embellished by multiple personified descriptions of its natural habitat. Tufted thyme (67–69) is pictured as a tough being with a strong will to survive, as if it were a human being trying to cope with the precariousness of life. Hypericum (74–75) and sulphurwort (76–77) too are treated with more visual detail than their enumeration strictly requires, thus showing the poet's way of turning bland data into poetry. For elaboration on natural beauty as a literary motif see Introduction 8.2; for the poet's use of personification see 8.1.

57 **εἰ δέ:** as Lardinois (2002, 12) points out, conditional subordinate clauses, starting with εἰ at the opening of a line and containing advice to the addressee, are a typical element of didactic poetry; cf. Klauser's (1898, 60–61) interpretation of εἰ δέ as an exhortative combination. Such lines are found throughout the *Works and Days* (e.g. 106, 312, 315, 361, 425, 479, 485, 618, 708, 721) and have a structuring role in the repeated addresses to the didactic partner. Nic. seems to have followed his predecessor in this use of εἰ-clauses as a structuring principle; cf. lines 87, 115, 409, 689, 747, 769, 848, 885, and Introduction 5.10. For a slightly different use of εἴ δε see 98 n.

**ἐπιδεύεται:** 'involves' (Gow & Scholfield) or 'demands'. This particular use is not found in Homer. The only instances that come close are Timo Phliasius *SH* 816.3, ἀρχὰς ἐπιδευέας ἄλλων ('principles requiring other principles', a quotation of Empedocles) and A.R. 2.315–316 ἐπιδευέα θέσφατα φαίνειν | μαντοσύνης ('prophecies requiring divination'). Usually the object of ἐπιδεύομαι is something positive (pleasure, relief), but here the object (κάματος), inevitably involved, is unwanted. As usual the epic variant is chosen over the normal form (viz. ἐπιδέομαι).

57–58 **ἄγχι δέ τοι νύξ | αὖλιν ἄγει:** a variation of ἀκρέσπερος in 25, but with the same framing function. The use of ἄγχι as an adv. of time instead of place is exceptional, the only parallel being Sapph. fr. 43.9 Voigt, ἄγχι γὰρ ἀμέρα. By using an adv. of place instead of time the poet portrays νύξ as a physical presence rather than a condition of time, adding to a feeling of urgency: nightfall is moving closer and only one who knows what to do can take safety measures in time.

58 **αὖλιν ἄγει:** either 'brings bed-time' (Gow & Scholfield; cf. 'rapproche l'heure de bivouac', Jacques) or 'brings the need for a place to bivouac'. LSJ's 'place for passing the night in, bivouac' or *LfgrE* ('Schlafplatz, Nachtlager im Freien') make no sense for this line. αὖλις is mainly used for animal accommodation, but can refer to any kind of dwelling; cf. 21 n. *Il.* 9.232, where αὖλις is used for 'camp', comes close to Nic.'s sense of 'a temporary place to sleep'.

**λιλαίεαι:** a highly epic word, occurring 24 times in Homer, usually in this *sedes*. *Il.* 14.331 (λιλαίεαι εὐνηθῆναι) is close in meaning, though at line-end; closer is *Od.* 9.451, where the same combination is found as a v.l. referring to Polyphemus' ram longing to sleep in the fold in the evening. Among Hellenistic poets it was popular with Apollonius (6 times); it is also found in Euph. *CA* 44.1 p. 38 (48 Van Groningen = Lightfoot), Theoc. 22.118 and Matro fr. 1.66 Olson-Sens (*SH*

534). Spanoudakis (2006, 52) suggests an allusion to Arat. 1141, κοίτης ἱμείρονται (of mice) here, but the *sedes* is different, and the context dissimilar.

59 **πολυρραγέος:** only here, either from ῥήγνυμι ('with many branches') or ῥάσσω ('violent'). Nic. is an avid user of coinages with the πολυ-prefix: πολυγλώχις (36), πουλυόδους (Ionic) 53, πολυαύξης (73, 596), πολύθριπτος (104), πολύστροιβος (310), πολύστρεπτος (480), πολυκήριος (798), πολύγουνος (872), πολύχνοος (875), πουλύγονος (901); for lexical innovation in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.2. The adj. is to be considered an epithet in imitation of early epic, rather than a purposeful addition; cf. Spatafora (2007a, 107) who considers the adj. to be based on the Homeric type of πολυμήχανος. The idea of adorning rivers with epithets is reflected too in 175, where the Nile is called πολύστομος, in 310, where the Nile is called πολύστροιβος, and in 890, where the river Choaspes is called πολύφλοισβος.

60 **ὑδρηλήν:** 'watery, moist', which could either mean 'wet on the outside' or 'full of water'. A poetic adj., here applied to an ordinary plant, growing in plenty on the edge of rivers (61–62). Gow & Scholfield take it to mean 'water-loving', which fits its description of ἀγαλλομένη in 62, but perhaps the plant is moist from the vapour splashing from the flowing river. As Spatafora (2005, 234) points out, the adj. already occurs in Homer in relation to the pleasantness of a place (*Od.* 9.132–133) and adds to the sense of a *locus amoenus*; cf. 472 n. See Introduction 8.2.

**καλάμινθον:** fem., as follows from the fem. adj.'s ὑδρηλήν and χαιτήεσσαν. It is not clear why Nic. avoided the regular fem. καλαμίνθη (cf. Dsc. 3.35, Ar. *Ec.* 648, Thphr. *CP* 2.16.4 et al.), unless the different forms designate different plants. Nic. is the first to mention καλάμινθος for mint; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 107.

**ὀπάζεο:** a highly poetic verb, used again in 520 and *Al.* 403. Although the verb is frequent in Homer (18 times) and found in much archaic and classical poetry Nic. is the only one to use this particular uncontracted middle imperat. Other forms of ὀπάζω are used in 356 and 813. The middle use 'take to yourself' is rare.

**χαιτήεσσαν:** an apt adj. for a plant with thick leaves, resembling long flowing hair (cf. the literal use of χαιτάεις in Pi. *P.* 9.5). Nic. is the first to use the adj. in this sense, although χαίτη is used for plants and leaves with tiny prickly hairs in Aesop. 281, and for thistledown in Theoc. 6.16. But in both these cases the hair or the down on the plants looks like real hair, whereas Nic. uses the adj. of the

way in which the leaves covering the plant resemble a mop of hair. Cazzaniga (1963a, 461–469) discusses the variant καιτήεσσαν, only found in Σ *Ther.* 60e, as a form of play on κητώεσσαν ('full of sea creatures', *Od.* 4.1), which was explained by Zenodotus as καιετάεσσαν ('full of hollows'), and seemed to be confirmed by Callimachus' καιτάεντος (*Hec.* fr. 47.6 H. = 639 Pf.); see Rengakos 1993, 85–86 and García Romero 1989. As transmitted in the mss, however, χαιτήεσσαν makes good sense both qua contents and as a poetical addition. For the spondaic line-end see 20 n. and Introduction 6.8.

61 **λιβάσιν:** in tragedy the noun can indicate both 'drop' (of tears in E. *IT* 1106), and 'source, stream' (as in E. *Andr.* 116). Both meanings are followed by the Alexandrian poets; 'drop' in A.R. 4.1375, 'source' in Call. *Ap.* 110–112. Nic.'s use here is wilfully ambiguous, playing with both meanings, i.e. in relation to the river, and to the moist taken in by the plant; Crugnola 1961, 135 and Spatafora 2007a, 108. The noun is associated with a *locus amoenus* in Call. *Ap.* 110–112. If Nic. has this passage in mind, or at any rate such usage, his use here would add to the enrichment of the scenery around the mint (καλαμίνθος, 60); Spatafora 2005, 234.

**παραέξεται:** a unique compound, with ἀέξω as a poetic variant of αὔξω.

**χείλη:** 'edges'. Herodotus uses χεῖλος metaphorically for the bank of a river (Hdt. 2.70, 94), much in the same way as Nic. does, but the metaphorical use of χεῖλος can already be found in Homer, as in *Od.* 4.616 it is used of the rim of a well-wrought silver mixing bowl. Waddell (1939, 189) points at six more parts of the body that are used metaphorically in Herodotus' second book.

62 **ἕρσεται ἀγλαύροισιν:** ἕρσεται is used only here and in 631, a verb created from the noun ἕρση (epic ἐέρση), 'dew', cognate ἄρδω; for the associations of ἐέρση with *loci amoeni* in earlier literature (*Il.* 14.348, *Od.* 13.245, Pi. *N.* 8.42) see Spatafora 2005, 234–235. According to Σ *Ther.* 62c ἄγλαυρος means θαλερός, but rivers can hardly be said to be 'blooming'; 'mighty' is possible. Apparently ἄγλαυρος is used by Nic. as a variant of ἀγλαός, both here and in 441, which gives 'bright, shining rivers'. The combination of these odd words, however, has a second layer as they form the names of Herse and Aglauros, two of the daughters of Cecrops. Such an indirect reference to Cecrops is the more powerful when the audience has Cecrops' snakelike lower body in mind.

But there is perhaps more to be made of the relation between Herse and Aglauros and snakes. In one of the versions of the myth of the daughters of

Cecrops (viz. Euripides' *Ion*) the baby Erichtonius, child of Gaia, is handed over to the daughters of Cecrops in a box in which Athena has surreptitiously hidden two snakes. When Cecrops' daughters open the box, they jump off the Acropolis in fear; see Gantz (1993, 235–239) for this and other versions of the myth. In Nic. it is interesting to see that these two daughters are indirectly mentioned in a context of a plant that is used to ward off snakes. Whereas originally Herse and Aglauros died because of snakes, they live on in the *Theriaca* to prevent others from doing so. The story of Cecrops' daughters and their disobedience in opening the chest also played a part in Callimachus' *Hecale* (fr. 70 H. = *SH* 288.16–29 = 260 Pf.); see Hollis 2009, 229–231. *Paronomasia* perhaps explains for the middle ending -ται of Nic.'s verbal coinage, to imitate καί.

**ἀγαλλομένῃ:** 'delighting in'. This is the usual metrical *sedes* (cf. *Il.* 2.462, 12.114, 20.222, *Od.* 5.176, Hes. *Th.* 68, *h.Ap.* 427, *h.Merc.* 553, although there are some exceptions, cf. *Il.* 16.91, *Od.* 6.272, Hes. *Th.* 587, *Sc.* 86 et al.), largely retained in Hellenistic poetry; cf. Matro fr. 1.74 Olson-Sens (*SH* 534), A.R. 1.973 et al. Spanoudakis (2006, 52) points at a similar metaphorical use (of ivy) in Theoc. 1.31, ἕλιξ καρπῷ … ἀγαλλομένα κροκόεντι. Nic.'s personified depiction of a plant delighting in the supply of clear water adds a poetic touch to the καλάμινθος ('mint'), which is mentioned first in the subsequent enumeration of useful plants. For personification of animals and plants in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.1. But Nic.'s choice for the verb seems motivated by variation on Homer as well: <u>π</u>ώλοισιν <u>ἀ</u>γαλλόμεναι <u>ἀ</u>ταλῇσι (*Il.* 20.222) is reflected in <u>ἀ</u>γλαύροισιν <u>ἀ</u>γαλλομένῃ <u>π</u>οταμοῖσιν; cf. Spatafora 2005, 235.

**63 ἢ σύ γ':** this particular line-opening is only found earlier in *Od.* 10.330. Variations of this combination in this *sedes* are μὴ σύ γ' (128, 625), τῇς σύ γ' (*Al.* 622), next to the variants ἠὲ σύ γ' (557, 909, *Al.* 90, 142, 427, 607) and μηδὲ σύ γ' (*Ther.* 574) that offer different metrical possibilities. Apart from τῇς σύ γ' all combinations at line-opening are found in Homer, who was perhaps the model for such formulaic openings. Although μηδὲ σύ γ' is found in other Hellenistic poets (Arat. 938, A.R. 4.825, Eratosth. *CA* 35.7, p. 66), the other variants seem to be limited to Nic.'s poetry.

**ὑποστορέσαιο:** although the opt. without ἄν often expresses a force close to the imperat. when used in the second person, here the teacher is giving options to his pupil rather than orders. For the poet's variation in imperative manners of speech see Introduction 6.10.

64 **βαρύοδμον:** used a few times by later prose writers (Aretaeus, Clemens of Alexandria, Oribasius) but not found in poetry. Nic. seems the first to use the compound, which he may have coined himself; see Introduction 6.2.

**ῥίγιστον:** 'most horribly'. This superl. (ῥιγέω) is another Homeric *unicum* (ῥίγιστα in *Il.* 5.872). Homer uses it as a neut. plur. noun, but some of the few subsequent poets who have used the word (Lyc., A.R., Nic.) chose differently, perhaps indulging in the Hellenistic literary game of imitation with variation, especially of rare Homeric words; see Giangrande 1976, 271–276. In Lyc. 263 it is used as an attributive adj., whereas in A.R. 2.215 and 2.292 it is used predicatively. Nic., probably aware of the choices of his predecessors, uses ῥίγιστον adverbially, adding another variant to the use of this Homeric rarity.

**ὄδωδεν:** the perf. of ὄζω is unique in Hellenistic poetry (though used again in *Al.* 115, 280 and 572). Nic. seems to have picked it up from *Od.* 5.60 and 9.210, where Homer uses the pluperf. form ὀδώδει at line-end.

65 **ὀριγανόεσσά τε χαίτη:** 'leaves of the marjoram'. The adj. ὀριγανόεις, perhaps coined by Nic., is applied for the sake of variety, avoiding the use of two gen. (the second being ἀβροτόνοιο in the next line). Moreover, coining a special adj. for an otherwise unremarkable object shows a certain element of epic parody; cf. 591 n. For χαίτη cf. χαιτήεσσαν in 60. This use of χαίτη, i.e. leaves on a plant resembling flowing hair or a horse's mane, is different from the use of χαίτη in Call. *Del.* 81, where it is used of trees growing on top of a mountain. Mineur (1984, 117) remarks: "The use of χαίτη to denote tiny hairs on plants in Theoc. 6.16 and Nic., *passim*, is a different kind of metaphor (not implying personification), and should not have been compared by Gow & Scholfield with the use in Callimachus." But it is unlikely that Nic. is talking about strewing the tiny, hardly visible hairs of marjoram, instead of its leaves; cf. 542–543, where it is clear that leaves are meant. Nic.'s metaphorical use of χαίτη *does* imply personification, as it is a poetic device the poet often uses in the *Theriaca* when it comes to descriptions of flora and fauna; see Introduction 8.1. Nic.'s use of χαίτη is close to Archestr. 37.2 O-S (*SH* 167), where the 'mother of the wine-producing grape-cluster begins to shed her hair' (μήτηρ οἰνοφόρου βότρυος χαίτην ἀποβάλλῃ), which seems to be the earlier instance of the metaphorical use of χαίτη to indicate leaves; Olson & Sens 2000, 155.

**66 ναὶ μήν:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.7.

**ἀβροτόνοιο:** 'wormwood'. χαίτῃ is connected both with ὀριγανόεσσα and ἀβροτόνοιο. The epic gen. ending -οιο applied to a plant name provides a deliberate contrast between highly poetic diction and a straightforward botanical term. As often Nic. presents common natural phenomena, such as animals and plants, in epic terms. The epic gen. is repeated in 92, but in 574 the regular ἀβροτόνου is used for metrical reasons.

**67 ἀργεννήν:** Aeolic for ἀργός 'white', used of sheep in *Il.* 3.198, 6.424, 18.529, 18.588 and *Od.* 17.472 and once of linen in *Il.* 3.141. The only other example in Hellenistic poetry is Rhian. *CA* 54.1, p. 17. οὔρεος ἀργεννοῖο περὶ πτύχας, which comes close in meaning to Nic.'s ἀργεννὴν ὑπὸ βῆσσαν. The mountainsides mentioned are probably white because of their chalky soil (LSJ), but as from Homer on the adj. is often used with sheep (e.g. *Il.* 6.424, 18.529) it could be argued that these mountainsides are called white because of sheep giving it a white appearance.

**68 φιλόζωος:** Nic. is not the first to use the adj. for a plant, cf. Thphr. *HP* 7.13.4, who qualifies plants with bulbous roots (κεφαλόρριζα) as 'tenacious of life'. LSJ's 'evergreen' seems too liberal, as there is little reason to assume that Nic.'s use would be more specific than Theophrastus' use.

**νοτερὴν ἐπιβόσκεται αἶαν:** the ἑρπύλλος (tufted thyme) is portrayed like an animal, feeding or grazing on the moist soil (cf. *h.Merc.* 232 βόσκετο ποίην at line-end, of grazing sheep); see Introduction 8.1

**αἶαν:** Nic. uses both αἶα (68, 168, 388, 759, *Al.* 271) and γαῖα (390, *Al.* 100) for the same metrical purposes as Homer.

**70 φράζεσθαι δ' ἐπέοικε:** the nature of didactic poetry demands frequent hortatory addresses in the second person. The didactic poet therefore faces the challenge of adding enough variety to mode, expression, construction and choice of words. Apart from the obvious imperat.'s there are imperative opt.'s, and imperative inf.'s (τέρσαι in 96, but see n., ἐξαλέασθαι in 121); in addition Nic. employs impersonal periphrastic constructions, as he does here; cf. Introduction 6.10.

**χαμαιζήλοιο:** see 66 n.

71 **ἐμπρίοντ' ὀνόγυρον:** 'biting pungent bean-trefoil' The only earlier instance of ἐμπρίω is found in Timotheus' (791.69 Hordern), where it is used for gnashing teeth (γόμφοισ⟨ιν⟩ ἐμπρίων); cf. Hordern 2002, 163. But Nic. uses the verb metaphorically for the pungent scent of the stinking bean-trefoil 'sawing' into one's nostrils, shifting the metaphor from the actual saw-like movement to the sharpness of the saw's teeth. Both the sharpness of the smell and the continuous effect of the bean-trefoil on the nose resemble a saw in action. Used again in the same *sedes* in *Al.* 533. For metaphors in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.7.

72 **ταμὼν ἄπο:** *tmesis inversa* with anastrophe, see 6 n. and Introduction 6.8.

73 **πολυαυξής:** probably a Nicandrean coinage, used again in 596; see 43 n. and Introduction 6.2.

74 **σκύρα τ' ἐχθρά:** 'the hated hypericum'. Although the plants mentioned in 57–79 are all useful when it comes to snake expulsion, we are reminded here that some plants can be disadvantageous to humans too. If the audience has come to expect a poem about the way nature provides man with the proper weapons (i.e. plants and herbs) to counter snakes, then this is a reminder to the audience that such a view of nature is too favourable. Just like in the proem (1–7), the poet makes clear that the countryside he is depicting is not bucolic in the Theocritean sense, i.e. pleasant, carefree and devoid of harm. In a sense Nic.'s portrayal of nature is markedly anti-bucolic; cf. Overduin 2014, 472–473 n. and Introduction 8.2.

**τά τ' εἴαρι σίνατο βούτην:** 'which vexes the herdsman in the springtime'. Although σίνομαι is often used to describe actual wounding (cf. σίνη in 1 and 702), the next line makes clear that it is the cows that are afflicted, whereas the herdsman is troubled by their suffering, but not physically injured himself. Jacques' translation "fléau du bouvier au printemps" (2002, 8) is closer than Gow & Scholfield's "injures" (1953, 33).

**βούτης:** see 5 n. and Introduction 6.10.

75 **σκυρόωσι:** 'go mad from eating *hypericum*'. Although σκυράω, only attested here, is clearly derived from σκύρον, the licence of turning e.g. a plant's name into a verb is unusual in formal epic diction. If this is a Nicandrean coinage it is a clear example of the liberty Nic. took in forming words; see Introduction 6.2.

**καυλεῖα:** καυλεῖον (only here, in 535, and in 882) is a pseudo-epic lengthening of καυλίον, the diminutive of καυλός, used here apparently for metrical purpose. For a similar pseudo-epic lengthening see 56 n.

76 **ναὶ μήν:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.7.

**πευκεδάνοιο βαρυπνόου:** 'strong-smelling sulphurwort'. Although the adj. is functional in pointing out one of the plant's most striking qualities, its repetition (in the same *sedes*) in 82 gives the impression that it is used as an epithet in imitation of early epic, and as such an archaising pseudo-formulaic element; see Introduction 6.3.

77 **ἀποσσεύει:** a very rare occurrence of the act. present. The middle aor. ἀπέσσυτο is found twice in the *Iliad* (6.390, 15.572) and once in Hes. *Th.* 859, meaning 'hurrying oneself off'. A.R. 1.805 has the middle ἀπεσσεύοντο, although with act. meaning. By using ἀποσσεύει Nic. is perhaps showing his awareness of the fact that the active of ἀποσσεύομαι is not used, exactly by using it himself. Moreover, by borrowing the active meaning 'driving away' from Apollonius he shows that the verb cannot only be used with an active meaning, but also in the active itself.

78 This fourth reference to sleep (cf. 23–25, 56 and 58) rounds off the second part of the general precautions section (21–114) by means of a second ring composition. See 57–79 n.

**εἰκαίῃ ... κοίτῃ:** 'casual field bed'. The couch in the field is randomly put together as explained by αὐτοπόνοιο χαμευνάδος in 23.

**ἀγραυλέϊ:** another unique form, perhaps created for metrical reasons, to avoid a *versus spondiacus* by changing ἀγραυλός into ἀγραυλής; the common form ἀγραυλός is used in 473, however, as a noun. For the spondaic line-end see Introduction 6.8.

79 **φωλειοῖσι:** The distinction between a φωλείος ('den', 'lair', used of serpents in Luc. *Philops.* 11, cf. φωλεόν in 32) and a χειά ('hole', used of serpents as well in *Il.* 22.93, 95) is not clear. The first seems to point at possible lurking-places in general, whereas the second is perhaps used for a serpent's 'home'; according to Spatafora (2007a, 112), however, the first is used only for the hole in which a snake hibernates. But maybe Nic. is not referring to two different lairs at all. If the two words refer to the same holes, then τὰ δὲ ἐμφράξαιο χεείαις might be a

further explanation of the procedure: 'place some herbs near your casual field bed and others at their holes; put these *in* their holes.'

**χεείαις:** a clever emendation of the pointless ms reading χελείαις. Jacques (2002, 8) points at the *diectasis*, which, although frequent in later epic, is unnecessary. Perhaps this is another example of Nic.'s deliberate avoidance of a spondaic line; cf. 78 n.

### *80–97 Preparation Of A Repellent Unguent*

After two sections on the production of repellent stench (either by means of fumigation or scented herbs) the next two passages (80–97, 98–114) describe the concoction of repellent unguents, with which the body must be anointed for protection. The first passage contains many lexical rarities, many of which are based on rare Homeric words, and is rich in its varied modes of address. The topic of sleep that functioned as a recurring theme in 21–79 is picked up again in 90, thus establishing a connection between the poems different parts so far. In addition, the end of 97 creates a ring composition as it picks up contents and tone of 80–81, the opening of this section.

**80 εἴγε:** in poetry an opt. of wish can occur with εἰ instead of εἰ γάρ or εἴθε. But such an opt. is not applicable here, since it is clear that λιπάοις is an imperat. opt. in the vein of e.g. 45, 79, 83. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 172) point at the similar use of εἰ in 689, 747 and 885, but do not give an explanation; besides, 747 is not comparable since it lacks a corresponding opt. Jacques (2002, 8) and Spatafora (2007a, 80) are correct in taking εἰ to be exhortative; cf. Klauser 1898, 61.

**κεραμήϊον:** an epic variant of κεράμειος.

**ὄλπην:** 'leathern oil-flask'. A rare word, found in Ion *TrGF* 19 fr. 10.1 and Achaeus fr. 19.2. The only other example in Hellenistic poetry is Theoc. 2.156 (ὄλπα in Doric). The variant ὄλπις (Sapph. fr. 141.3 Voigt, Call. fr. 181 Harder) is found in Theoc. 3.26 as a nickname for a fisherman.

**81 λιπάοις:** derived from λίπος/λιπαρός, the verb λιπάω means 'to be shiny', 'to have an oily appearance' (cf. Leon. Alexandr. *AP* 6.324.1 = *FGE* 1872, Nic. *Al.* 487). Usually the verb focuses on the result of the anointment, i.e. being shiny, whereas here the procedure is the same, but the intended result is to smell repellent.

**εὐήρεα γυῖα:** in general εὐήρης (ἀραρίσκω) applies to well-fitted, or well-built instruments; cf. *Od.* 11.121, E. *IT* 1050, Plu. *Ant.* 65 (of ships), Luc. *Cat.* 19.12 (of well-poised oars). Nic. transports the meaning of εὐήρης to a man's well-fitted instruments, i.e. his limbs, echoing Homer's ἐυῆρες ἐρετμόν, at line-end in *Od.* 11.121 and 129. Nic. seems to have made a deliberate reversal of personification, portraying human assets as tools; cf. Introduction 8.1. As the adj. has no logical, but a strictly ornamental purpose here, it primarily functions as a little joke, connecting Nic. to Homer through allusion. Gow & Scholfield's translation "supple" refers rather to the condition of the limbs than to their shapely state. The combination is found elsewhere only at line-end in Max. 211, 234 and 266. Considering Maximus' kindred style these are likely to be borrowings from Nic.; cf. Effe 1977, 134–136.

82 **πευκεδάνοιο βαρυπνόου:** see 76 n.

**ἄλλοτ':** see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

83 **λίπει ἔνι:** the rare postpositive use of ἐν, not found in prose, is a contrived poeticism; for other instances see Introduction 6.8.

84 **ἀλθήεντ':** possibly a Nicandrean coinage; cf. 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

85 **κνηστήρ:** 'grater' (κνάω), only here and in *Al.* 308, although Pfeiffer suggest that Callimachus used it in fr. 177.9 (54c Harder = *SH* 259), where the papyrus has ]τῆρι; see Pfeiffer 1953, 147. The noun is ostensibly a synonym for κνῆστις, used in *Ther.* 696 and known from *Il.* 11.640. Whether Callimachus or Nic. coined the word, varying on Homeric *hapax legomena* by adding new endings is a well-attested phenomenon within Hellenistic poetry; see Giangrande 1970a, 46 ff. and cf. McLennan 1977, 13–14 for a similar case. To an attentive ancient audience, perhaps consisting of men who were learned scholars themselves, such coinages must have triggered attention as only the ones who were fully aware of their Homer-texts must have understood such an abstruse reference.

86 **βροτέην σιάλων ὑποέτρεσαν ὀδμήν:** *hypallage*, as βροτέην qualifies the spittle (σιάλων) rather than the smell (ὀδμήν). This remark, casually made among the various deterring qualities of plants, is highly surprising. According to Nic. the scent of spittle does the job just as well. Leaving the accuracy of this method aside, we may wonder what use there is in collecting different kinds of plants if plain spitting is sufficient to prevent snakes from coming close; cf.

Overduin 2009a. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 172) mention the widespread belief in the deterrent or even destructive effect of human saliva; cf. Jacques (2002, 88) and Spatafora (2007a, 86) for such natural human powers of countering snakes. Whether this is true or not, Nic. presents this method as a serious alternative for his plant recipes. For the curious powers attributed to spit cf. Ael. *NA* 4.22.

**ὑποέτρεσαν:** a highly poetic verb, first used in the *Iliad* (7.217 ὑποτρέσαι; 15.636, 17.275 ὑπέτρεσαν; 17.587 ὑπέτρεσας), and later copied by Callimachus (fr. 64.11 Harder, *Hec.* fr. 69.2 H. = *SH* 288 = 260 Pf., fr. 288.2 Pf., *Del.* 55) and Apollonius (1.1049). By retaining the o-micron of the preverb, thus ignoring elision, Nic. has created a highly unusual variation of the verb. In general only the prepositions περί and πρό retain their final vowel. Whenever elision of the final vowel of the preverb is ignored, a digamma explains for the hiatus (e.g. ὑπο(ϝ)είξομεν in *Il.* 4.62, ἀπο(ϝ)είπω in *Od.* 1.373), which is clearly not the case here. For the use of the empiric aor. see 202 n.

87 **εἰ δὲ σύ γε:** *Il.* 4.34 and 5.350 have εἰ δὲ σύ γ'; εἰ δὲ σύ opens *Il.* 1.280, 9.262 and 12.248. The only previous example of this combination at line-opening without the elided γε is A.R. 3.435. The use of γε seems to be metrically convenient rather than genuinely emphatic. See 21 n.

**ὀλίγῳ ἐν βάμματι:** the placement of a preposition between an adj. and its noun is generally restricted to poetry and adds to the feeling that the audience is confronted with poetry here and not with a scientific treatise, despite the contents of the work. Such poetic devices continually underline the poet's aspirations, which are not in the field of science, even though the superficial reader may be misled by the contents; cf. Introduction 6.8.

88 **χλωρηΐδα:** a peculiar poetic fem. of χλωρός. The only previous instance of χλωρηΐς is *Od.* 19.518, where χλωρηΐς ἀηδών occupies the same *sedes* at line-end. According to Rutherford (1992, 193) the meaning is obscure in Homer, but possibly a colour-term; cf. Papadopoulou 2009. Most commentators interpret the word as meaning 'green', next to alternatives as 'amid green leaves' or 'throbbing' (of the nightingale's throat as it sings). In Nic.'s line the adj. clearly refers to the colour of the skin of the caterpillar (κάμπη, 87). Considering the fact that χλωρηΐς is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* and occupies the same metrical position in both authors, it is likely that Nic. is alluding to the Homeric line by reproducing this particular word. Normally only particles and attributive adj.'s stand between prepositions and their corresponding nouns. The unusual word order here (ἐπὶ χλωρηΐδα νώτῳ) can be explained by Nic.'s wish to retain the

Homeric *sedes* of χλωρηΐδα. Not only does Nic. indulge in the word's rarity, he also makes clear that, at least to him, the meaning in Homer is clear, by reusing the ancient word in a new context; for the use of Homeric words of disputed meaning in Hellenistic poetry as a literary device see McLennan 1977, 12 and Introduction 6.4.

**ἐγκύμονι κάρφει:** 'with ripe fruit'. Apart from the metaphorical use of ἐγκύμων in e.g. Pl. *Smp.* 209b and [Longin.] 9.1.4 (of the mind), 13.2.8 (of the Pythia, 'pregnant' with hallucinatory vapours), *Corp.Herm.* 30.5 (of silence), Nonn. *D.* 9.127 (of a mystical casket), 20.130 (of a winepress teeming with liquor) and 47.42 (of wineskins), ἐγκύμων is occasionally used for any kind of physical pregnancy other than human or animal; cf. Pl. *Epin.* 979a6 (of the earth), Euseb. 24.696.52 (χῶραι ... ἐγκύμονες σπερμέτων), Orib. 12.χ.7 (of the red flower of the χαμαίδρωψ-plant). Nic. probably picked up the phrase in a prose treatise on plants; cf. Thphr. *CP* 3.2.8 who uses ἐγκύμων of teeming plants.

**90 γυῖα πέριξ λιπάσειας:** λιπάζω, a variation of λιπάω in 81, is only found here and in 112. The instruction on the anointment of the limbs is repeated twice more, in 97 and 112.

**ἀναίμακτος:** although used nine times by Nonnus, the word is alien to early epic poetry. The few early instances known are mainly from tragedy (A. *Supp.* 196, E. *Ph.* 264 and *Rh.* 222), imitated by Lycophron (988). The adj. means either 'bloodless' (as in Lycophron, where it qualifies the bloodless eyes of a statue) or 'unscathed', which must be the appropriate meaning here.

**ἰαύοις:** yet another variant on the topic of sleep; cf. εὕδῃς (25), ὕπνοιο κορέσσῃ (56), αὖλιν ἄγει, κοίτου δὲ λιλαίεαι (58), κοίτῃ (78). For such interweaving of theme's through repetition see Introduction 5.6.

**91 ἐν στέρνῳ ... θυείης:** a parody of the well-known turn of phrase ἐν(ι) στέρνοισ(ι), cf. Tyrt. 24.1 *IEG*², A. *Ch.* 746, fr. 362.1 *TrGF*, E. *Ph.* 134, S. *Aj.* 633, B. 11.88 Maehler, Simon. *AP* 7.443.1. Here στέρνον is used metaphorically of the core of a mortar. The phrasing is perhaps a specific verbal echo of A.R. 4.1061: ἀλλά οἱ ἐν στέρνοις ἀχέων εἱλίσσετο θυμός (for the combination of θυμόν and ἐν στέρνοις cf. A.R. 3.634–635). Whereas Apollonius is describing the mood of Medea's heart within her chest, Nic., while imitating the phrasing but giving it an entirely different meaning by different endings, is speaking of the stony heart of a mortar (θυεία, changed by Nic. into the epic-Ionic θυείη).

**προβαλὼν μυλόεντι:** ostensibly a verbal echo of *Il.* 7.270: εἴσω δ' ἀσπίδ' ἔαξε βαλὼν μυλοειδέϊ πέτρῳ, where a millstone-like rock is cast and consequently breaks a shield. Nic. has altered the Homeric adj. μυλοειδής, 'having the appearance (εἶδος) of a millstone', in μυλόεις, adding a more general suffix to the stem; for Nic.'s preference for coining adj.'s in -εις see Introduction 6.2. As usual Nic.'s imitation with variation of this Homeric *hapax legomenon* is enhanced by the occupation of the Homeric *sedes*. Nonnus, recognising Nic.'s twist, combines the description of the Homeric battle scene with Nic.'s adaptation: … ἐπ' ὀμφαλόεντι δὲ κύκλῳ | βαλλομένη μυλόεντι λίθῳ σμαράγησε βοείη (D. 5.44–45).

92 **ἀβροτόνοιο:** this is the usual *sedes* of 'wormwood' in Nic.; cf. 66, 574 and *Al.* 45.

**κομόωντας:** although similar in use, the verb κομάω is used much more frequently for plants than the adj. χαιτήεις ('thick-leaved'); cf. 60 and 65 n. *Diectasis*, occurring frequently in the *Theriaca*, is a regular feature of epic diction.

**ὀράμνους:** 'sprays'. A metrical variant of the common uncontracted ὀρόδαμνος, which is found in 863 and *Al.* 603; the only other poet to use the contracted variant is Agath. *AP* 5.292.1 (ὀράμνῳ), whereas Nic. uses it three times again in *Al.* 154, 420 and 487. A diminutive (ὀροδαμνίς) is found in Theoc. 7.138, but the context of a mortar in *Ther.* 91 ff. indicates that sprigs or sprays are meant, rather than branches or boughs, which is the usual meaning of ὀρόδαμνος.

93 **ἀμμίγδην:** see 21 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**ὀδελοῦ:** a dialect form of ὀβολός/ὀβελός, but still quite a rare one, only found in Epicharmus (fr. 68.3 K-A) and Aristophanes (*Ach.* 796). Nic. consistently uses ὀδελός, here, in 655, 908 and *Al.* 308, 327, 601. In Nic. it refers not to the coin ὀβολός, but to a specific weight (ca. 0,57 grams; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 224), although both meanings ultimately originate from the Homeric ὀβελός, 'spit' (cf. *Il.* 1.465, *Od.* 3.462).

**αἴσιος:** although the phenomenon is attested in later authors, Nic. is the first to treat αἴσιος as an adj. of two terminations. The adj. is normally used for auspicious signs, especially of birds (Pi. *N.* 9.18, X. *Cyr.* 2.4.19, Theoc. 17.72, Call. *Lav.Pall.* 123 etc.) or at least for things that are favourable in other ways, as in S. *OC* 34 where it translates as 'timely'. Nic. simply seems to mean that a ὁλκή ('dosage') of an obol is suitable. If αἴσιος was to be interpreted as 'propitious',

then some luck would be involved, which can hardly be said of a quantity, unless some garden-cress is added 'for good luck'.

94 **χεροπληθῆ:** the usual form is χειροπληθής, which is found occasionally in prose, but only once in poetry, in [Theoc.] 25.63. This is not the only time Nic. uses rare words that are reminiscent of the twenty-fifth idyll of Theocritus (cf. n. on 1, 4, 11, 28, 30), although the uncertain date of [Theoc.] 25 precludes conclusions about influence.

**νεοθήλεα:** possibly in imitation of νεοθήλεα ποίην (*Il.* 14.347), which is the only previous occurrence of this word in the same *sedes* at line-end.

96 **τέρσαι:** 'put to dry', either an act. aor. inf. or a middle imperat. The act., used again in 693, is not found before the Hellenistic period (Theoc. 22.63, Euph. *SH* 429.1 = 108.1 Lightfoot); Homer has either τέρσομαι (cf. Nic.'s τέρσαιο in 709) or the cognate verb τερσαίνω. To achieve maximum variation Nic. often alternates between proper imperat.'s, inf.'s with imperative power or imperative opt.'s, which is probably the case in 96–97: τέρσαι (inf.), θρύπτε (imperat.), λιπαίνοις (opt.); see 46 and 70 n. and Introduction 6.10.

**ὑποσκιόεις:** cf. 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

97 This is one of the rare instances in the *Theriaca* of a spondaic second foot followed by a caesura (violation of Hilberg's Law), at odds with the Callimachean restrictions with regard to the hexameter; see Maas § 92, West 1982, 155, and Introduction 6.11.

**ἐν ὄλπῃ θρύπτε … γυῖα λιπαίνοις:** at the end of this passage on the preparation of a prophylactic unguent, Nic. recaptures its first lines by means of a verbal repetition—with variation—of 80–81 (ὄλπην | … ἐνθρύπτων λιπάοις εὐήρεα γυῖα), thus creating a ring composition.

### *98–114 Preparation of a Second Repellent Unguent*

After describing a first prophylactic unguent in 80–97, a second one is given, this time consisting of ingredients that are less easy to come by, particularly those taken from the animals themselves. For the use of such animal-based ingredients see Spatafora 2007a, 116. As Sistakou (2012, 229) brilliantly points out, Nicander's grand style and presentation here turn the description from a the making of a mere drug into the image of "a witch cooking a magic potion in a huge pot—a scene evoking death rather than therapy."

98 **Εἴ γε μέν:** combinations of εἰ with the particals δέ or γέ at line-opening are often employed by Nic. as section markers (e.g. 458, 689, 747, 769). Here, in addition, εἴ γε is used as a means of stringing passages together. The opening of 98 thus corresponds anaphorically with εἴ δε in 57, εἴ γε in 80 and εἴ δε in 115. For the use of εἴ γε/δε as a structuring device in didactic poetry see 57 n. and Introduction 5.10.

**τριόδοιο:** an encounter with snakes coupling at a crossroads is not unique in Greek literature, particularly with the story of Teiresias in mind. The seer, turned into a woman after having struck two snakes coupling (at a crossroads?) on Mount Cyllene, was transformed into a man again after he had struck the same pair of snakes again; [Apollod.] 3.71 W. (3.6.7 F.); cf. Hes. fr. 275 MW. The story was certainly known to Nic., as he treated it in the second book of the *Heteroeumena*; cf. Ant.Lib. 17. Unlike Apollodorus, Antoninus Liberalis' paraphrase (17.5, the story of Leukippos) explicitly mentions the crossroads, Τειρεσίας ..., ὅτι τοὺς ἐν τῇ τριόδῳ μιγνυμένους ὄφεις ἐντυχὼν ἀπέκτεινεν, which seems to reflect Nic.'s original, as this detail is not mentioned elsewhere; other variants are summed up by Gantz 1993, 529–530. To the informed reader the significance of catching snakes coupling at a crossroads may not go unnoticed. But the effect of a crossroads on a reader may be more generally associated with superstition (see e.g. Spatafora 2007a, 116), and with Hecate, who is called the goddess of the crossroads (her epithet was Τριοδῖτις) in Theoc. 2.36. See also 128 n.

**μεμιγμένα:** expressing both the primary meaning ('mixed'), which is apt for the image of two intertwining snakes, and the secondary meaning ('having intercourse', further elucidated in 99 through θορνύντα), well-known and frequently employed from Homer on. Though usually constructed with a dat., the absolute use of μίσγω is occasionally found in early epic poetry (e.g. *Il.* 9.275, *Od.* 15.439).

**κνώδαλα:** 'monsters', used for all kinds of wild, or at least dangerous creatures, although according to the Suda (κ 1881) it ought to be used properly only for marine animals (as in *Al.* 391 and 503): κνώδαλον· τὸ θαλάσσιον τὸ ἐν τῇ ἁλὶ κινούμενον ζῷον. κινώπετον δὲ τὸ χερσαῖον, τὸ ἐν τῷ πέδῳ κινούμενον ἑρπετόν. Here and in 399 it is more or less used as a synonym for ἑρπετά or κινώπετα, but 760 ff. make clear that in the *Theriaca* the designation applies to non-reptilians as well; see 27 n. [Theoc.] 25.183 has κνώδαλον in the same *sedes*, where it applies to the Nemean lion, but the uncertain date of the poem makes imitation hard to assert; cf. 1 n.

**99** **ζωά:** emphatically placed at the opening of the line. In 42 the addition of νέον implies that the horn of the roe needs to be fresh in order to have the desired effect. Here we have a similar prescription, as apparently only living snakes will do the job. One wonders if Nic. really considered it so easy to obtain two mating snakes, and if it really would be worth all the trouble. The risk involved in catching two snakes at the same time and putting them in a pot seems just as great as the advantage of obtaining a prophylactic unguent. The complete lack of sympathy the poet shows for these snakes, which after all meet a gruesome end, being cooked to death over a fire, shows just how strict Nic.'s view of nature is: all poisonous animals are enemies against which measures must be taken, at all costs.

**θορνύντα:** a rare variant of θρῴσκω, aor. θορεῖν. Although θόρνυμαι (from θορεῖν, for the original θάρνυσθαι; Chantraine 444) is found previously in [S.] fr. 1127.9 *TrGF*, Megasth. fr. 38b, 14 (*FHG* 2) and Hdt. 3.109, the act. part. θορνύς is unique. Elsewhere Nic. uses the middle; θορνυμένου (130), θόρνυσθαι (827). The *paronomasia* between θορνύντα and θρόνα may have played a role in Nic.'s choice for the postulated *θόρνυμι.

**θρόνα:** according to Clitarchus (Σ Theoc. 2.59) an Aetolian gloss. The word designates herbs used as charms (as in Theoc. 2.59) or as drugs (cf. Lyc. 674); cf. 493, 936. Here, however, it is used for individual ingredients in general, as in 101 one of the θρόνα in question is the marrow of a stag; cf. 949, where crab and hare's curd are among the θρόνα.

**100** If Nic. is thinking of Teiresias' story when talking about encountering snakes coupling at a crossroads (see 98 n.) this line seems to be relevant as well. The seer may have used a different method than the procedure described in 98–99, but in either case a cure (ἀλεξητήριον) against an awful fate (οὐλομένῃσιν ... ἄταις) is found.

**δήεις:** a defective verb, always with fut. sense, of which only δήεις, δήομεν and δήετε are found in Homer. As a Homeric rarity it was picked up by Callimachus (*AP* 7.520 = *HE* 1202 = 10 Pf.), Aratus (161, 436), Apollonius (A.R. 3.941) and Numenius (*SH* 584.2). Nic. is a particularly keen user (8× in the *Theriaca*), although it is not found in his other extant works.

**οὐλομένῃσιν ... ἄταις:** the combination is strongly reminiscent of epic, e.g. *Il.* 10.391 (πολλῇσιν ... ἄτῃσι), 19.91–92 (Ἄτη ... | οὐλομένη), A.R. 1.802–803 (οὐλομένης δὲ θεᾶς πορσύνετο μῆτις | Κύπριδος, ἥ τέ σφιν θυμοφθόρον ἔμβαλεν ἄτην), A.R.

2.153 (οὐλομένην ἄτην); cf. *Al.* 81 (ὀλοῇ … ἄτῃ). By using such diction, retaining Homer's poetic plur., agony of epic proportions is called to mind, with which the impact of the dangers described in the *Theriaca* is poetically aggrandised. For Nic.'s fascination with the poisoned body, see Sistakou 2012, 234–250.

**101** The preparation of the recipe treated here is not without danger, as the main ingredients not only consist of two living, mating snakes, but also of the marrow of a stag that has just been killed. Although it is impossible to rule out that this ingredient was considered essential, the killing of a stag is presented as if it was just as easy as gathering leaves. Since Nic. states explicitly that a freshly killed (νεοσφαγέος) stag is needed, the addressee apparently either needs to get hold of a stag that has just been killed, or to go hunting himself every time he wants to prepare this particular prophylactic unguent. As Spatafora (2007a, 116) points out, the inclusion of this particular ingredient in a prophylactic against snakes, reminiscent of the use of a deer's antlers to create repellent smoke in *Ther.* 36, is echoed in *Ther.* 141–144, where the poet tells us about the perennial enmity between deer and snakes.

**νεοσφαγέος:** likely a borrowing from tragedy; A. fr. 298.1 *TrGF*, S. *Aj.* 546, 898, *Tr.* 1130, E. *Hec.* 894. Nic.'s evocation of epic (μυελοῖο) and tragic diction, applied to the plain measures of a recipe adds to a sense of permanent contrast within the poem.

**μυελοῖο:** μυελός with an epic gen. ending is not found elsewhere. Here—at the end of the hemistich—it corresponds well with ἐλάφοιο, which is often found in Homer and is imitated in Call. *Dian.* 96 and A.R. 4.174.

**102** **δραχμάων:** this non-contracted gen. plur. of δραχμή is restricted to Nic., who uses it four times in the *Theriaca*, always at line-opening (cf. 581, 600, 710) and once in the *Alexipharmaca* (148). In the *Theriaca* it always refers to weight (viz. 3,421 grams; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 242), never to coins.

**103–104** **ἥν τε θυωροί … καλέονται:** for the pattern cf. 230 n.

**103** **θυωροί:** 'perfumers'; for ordinary people in Nic.'s world as an element of *enargeia* see Introduction 8.2.

**105** **ἰσόμορον … ἐλαίου:** echoed in 592, ἐν δὲ καὶ ἀργέσταο λίπευς ἰσόμοιρον ἐλαίου. Though the content is virtually the same in both lines, the variation is

apparent. The unique gen. ἀργῆτος here is not only varied in 592 (ἀργέσταο) but also in *Al.* 98 and 204 (ἀργήεντος), each time used for olive-oil.

**χέειν:** for Nic.'s carefully avoided repetitions of imperat.'s cf. 70 n. and Introduction 6.10.

**106 τετράμορον κηροῖο:** emphatically placed as an echo of ἰσόμορον δ' ὠμοῖο in the previous line.

**108 μελδόμεναι:** the verb is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 21.263), imitated by Callimachus in the *Hecale* (fr. 127 H. = 322 Pf.): γέντα βοῶν μέλδοντες. Hollis (2009, 309): "de Jan (*De Callimacho*, diss. 1893, 97–99) thought that Call.'s use of the verb reflects a Homeric controversy", consisting in the question whether in Homer μέλδομαι is a deponent or not. Apparently Callimachus considered the Homeric form to be a non-deponent pass. and introduced the act. μέλδω. Nic., possibly as a recognition of Callimachus' solution to this grammatical debate, chose in turn to use a pass. part. with pass. meaning. The act., as used by Callimachus, is only found elsewhere in the *Manethoniana* (6.464); cf. Rengakos 1993, 124.

**λάζεο:** a favourite of Nic., used five times in the *Theriaca* (610, 648, 838, 856). The only other instances of the imperat. of λάζομαι are λάσδεο (Theoc. 8.84) and λάσδευ (Theoc. 15.21). Except for Orph. *L.* 172, this particular form is restricted to the *Theriaca*.

**109 εὐεργῆ λάκτιν:** not a pestle (so LSJ) but 'a well-made ladle', as Hollis (2009, 294) points out. Both Σ and the Suda (λ 71) explain the word as τορύνη ('ladle', 'stirrer'). The adj.'s τυκτήν (108) and εὐεργῆ are virtual synonyms. The latter calls to mind Hes. *Op.* 629, where a rudder is qualified with the same adj. But Nic. probably borrowed the phrase from Call. *Hec.* fr. 110 H. (286 Pf.), ἑὴν εὐεργεα λάκτιν, as this is the only other instance of λάκτις. See also 708 n.

**μυρία πάντα:** according to Hopkinson (1984, 148) an "idiomatic expression for abundance"; cf. Call. *Cer.* 88, Arat. 113. But here such an interpretation hardly makes sense, as in this recipe merely four ingredients must be added to the snakes. Nic. rather seems to be mocking hyperbolic qualifications in highly epic terms here.

**ταράσσειν:** 'stir', rather than 'pound up' (Gow & Scholfield), following from the interpretation of ladle, rather than pestle, for λάκτις.

**110** **συμφύρδην:** 'mixedly', another unique adv.; see Introduction 6.2.

**ἀπόερσον:** imperat., only found here, probably from *ἀποέρρω ('turn' away; Beekes 117), of which only the aor. occurs three times in the *Iliad* (6.348, 21.283, 329). In Homer it is used for the waves of the sea or of a river, violently sweeping someone away. In this line such an interpretation seems somewhat dramatic for the act of tearing out the spines of the snakes caught. In a way the Homeric model is inverted, because in the Iliadic lines man is subdued by the power of nature, whereas in the recipe Nic. prescribes, it is nature—or at least one of its violent manifestations—that is being subdued by man, literally, in a cooking pot.

**111** **κακοεργός:** cf. 8 n. If Nic. has Aratus in mind here, κακοεργός … ἰός could be a reference to κακοεργόν … μάχαιραν in *Phaen.* 131, in which κακοεργός occupies the same *sedes* and in which both ἰός (a natural weapon) and μάχαιραν (a man-made weapon) are at line-end. If this contrast is intentional, it is striking that Arat. 131 focuses specifically on the aspect of evil starting with humans forging bronze (ἐχαλκεύσαντο). Nic.'s reversal could be taken as an underlining of the danger poison poses, a danger surpassing Aratus' human weaponry.

**112** **γυῖα δὲ πάντα λίπαζε:** cf. 97 n. Near the end of this section on the preparation of a second repellent unguent the final instruction ('anoint yourself'), already given in 81 (λιπάοις εὐήρεα γυῖα, at line-end), 90 (γυῖα πέριξ λιπάσειας, opening of the line) and 97 (γυῖα λιπαίνοις, at line-end), is once more repeated at the opening of the line, this time—for the sake of variation—with an imperat. verb; see Introduction 6.10.

**ἐπὶ κοίτον:** the problem of sleeping outside has already been addressed in 25, 55–58, 78 and 90; see Introduction 5.6.

**113** **ἀλώϊα ἔργα:** 'threshing'. It is not clear why the prescribed unguent is only recommended after the work of the threshing is done and the thresher has girded himself again (ζωσάμενος 114), since one would expect that during this work the danger of getting bitten is not less imminent—as is in fact confirmed by the story of Alcibius, told in 545–549, who gets bitten by a snake while sleeping on the margin of a threshing floor. Possibly the poet wanted to end the passage with the image of a toiling rustic, depicting once more the contrast between the realistic Nicandrean farmers toiling in the hot summer and the bucolic Theocritean rustic, resting in the shade; cf. 5 and 21–34 n. See Introduction 8.2.

**114 θρίναξι βαθὺν διακρίνεαι ἄντλον:** 'when you winnow a large heap of corn with your three-pronged fork'. After the threshing the piled-up corn is separated from the chaff by means of a θρίναξ, apparently not a winnow, but some sort of trident. θρίναξι is probably a poetic plur.; the use of two smaller forks (one for each hand) is unlikely, as threshing is a physically demanding task. For the use of plur. in case of utensils, however, cf. 952.

### *115–156 How to Avoid Snake Attacks When Unprepared*

In the previous sections Nic. has given an account of the preparation of repellent unguents. Now he proceeds with a different situation: what to do when one is not able to prepare oneself by means of prophylactics. As it turns out, the teacher's instructions are limited to descriptions of periods in which one must be particularly alert (summer, 121), places one must avoid, e.g. the crags of the Othrys mountain (145) and species to beware of, e.g. the viper (129) and the *seps* (147).

**115 δακέεσσιν:** the word usually refers to biting animals in particular (δάκνω), as it does here, although occassionally δάκος is also used for noxious (metaphorically of the Trojan horse in A. *Ag.* 824) or plainly wild (e.g. E. *Cyc.* 325, Call. *Dian.* 84) creatures in general, without a specific relation to dangerous or even poisonous bites; cf. Bornmann 1968, 43 with references, and Fernández-Galiano 1976 s.v. In the *Theriaca* the word is normally used for snakes (121, 146, 158, 282, 336); the only exceptions are a marten, added as an ingredient and not as a dangerous or poisonous creature itself (696), and a salamander (818). Barrett (1964, 282) points out that δάκος originally meant bite (as in Pi. *P.* 2.53), but was used later for the bite of a beast, or the biting beast itself.

**ἀφαρμάκτος:** 'unmedicined', i.e. not anointed with one of the unguents previously described (80–114). A play on the second meaning of ἀφαρμάκτος ('unpoisoned', Luc. *Dmort.* 7.2, Nonn. *D.* 22.78) may be intended; the non-privative adj. φαρμακτός (twice in the *Manethoniana*) means poisonous (4.52) or poisoned (4.540), not medicined. For such play of Nic., who often chooses the less obvious of different possible meanings, see Introduction 6.6.

**116 ἄκμηνος σίτων:** 'fasting from food'. Nic. is not referring to fasting in the sense of 'willingly refraining from food' for religious, medical or purifying reasons, nor to people who are about to die from starvation (cf. A.R. 4.1295), but in the sense of 'not having eaten for some time'. It is likely that Nic. borrowed the phrase from Callimachus (ἄκμηνον δόρποιο, *Hec.* fr. 120 H. = 312 Pf.), who,

according to Hollis (2009, 306), was probably responsible for reintroducing it, having found the word four times in Homer, particularly *Il.* 19.163 (ἄκμηνος σίτοιο at line-opening). Nic., in reaction to Callimachus, chose to retain the Homeric noun, although with a different (i.e. plur.) ending, instead of altering the Homeric noun, but keeping the epic gen. sg. ending -οιο, as Callimachus did. For the interaction between Callimachus and Nic. see Introduction 6.5.

**ὅτε δὴ κακὸν ἄνδρας ἰάπτει:** Jacques reads ἀνδράσ', taking κακόν as the object, with δάκεα to be supplied from the previous line. The emendation is unnecessary, and in addition the scholia (Σ *Ther.* 116c) explain ἰάπτει as βλάπτει, in which case κακόν cannot be the object; for such a close connection between ἰάπτω and βλάπτω see e.g. Q.S. 6.546, τοῦ δ' οὐ χρόα καλὸν ἴαψεν, where the direct object is the thing wounded, not the thing hurled. Although ἰάπτει is used here as βλάπτω, the verb sometimes means 'shoot' or 'hurl' (e.g. Rhian. *CA* 1.4, p. 9), a meaning that seems to function here in the background as it reminds us of the nature of the κακόν: venom sent forth from the snake's fangs, and shot into the victim's skin. As Jacques (2002, 90) points out, poisonous bites are the most fierce when the victim is sober, and even worse when the attacker, be it snake or scorpion, is sober as well; see 124 n.

The particle δή gives the phrase the strength of an observation that is obvious both to the teacher and the pupil, presented as common knowledge; for such use of δή to present empirical facts cf. Sicking & Van Ophuijsen 1993, 143. Such empirical use suggests that both teacher and pupil are experts, but perhaps such knowledge was widespread.

**117 αἶψα κεν … ἐρωήσειας:** in Homer the verb ἐρωέω is used both for the flowing of blood (*Od.* 16.441 ~ *Il.* 1.303) and for driving back the enemy (*Od.* 13.57). Here Nic. imitates *Od.* 16.441–442 αἶψά οἱ αἷμα κελαινὸν ἐρωήσει περὶ δουρί | ἡμετέρῳ, spoken by Achilles, 'soon your dark blood will flow through my spear', warning the addressee not to taunt the speaker. In Nic.'s line, however, the second meaning of ἐρωέω, 'drive back', or rather 'keep at bay', is used, to which 'harm' or 'death' should be supplied. The victim can escape harm, although not with the aid of weaponry: only the poet's knowledge (ἡμετέρῃσιν … ἐφετμῇς, echoing Hesiod's similar instruction in *Op.* 298, ἡμετέρης … ἐφετμῆς) can provide a solution, showing how much Nic.'s contemporary weapons differ from Achilles' spear. Nevertheless, the reference to the declarations of enmity in *Od.* 16.441 and *Il.* 1.303 underline Nic.'s veiled warlike portrayal of the struggle between man and snake; see Introduction 8.8.

**118 παλίγκοτος:** 'malignant'. Mainly used in poetry, although occasionally found in prose. Its only occurrences in Hellenistic poetry are Theoc. 22.58, Euph. *CA* 51.12, p. 40 (57 Van Groningen), *SH* 429.12 (probably by Euph. too), and [Mosch.] *Megara* 12. Nic. may have had Theocritus in mind, as in both lines παλίγκοτος occupies the same *sedes*, but particularly because of the similar situation: the adj. is used of one who shows hostile behaviour towards those who approach him. In Theocritus' *Idyll* 22 it is the inimical king Amycus who is malignant towards Polydeuces, who has approached him without his consent, to which Polydeuces responds ἄγριος εἶ, πρὸς πάντα παλίγκοτος ἠδ' ὑπερόπτης; for the interpretation cf. Sens 1997, 121–122. In Nic. παλίγκοτος is used in much the same way against people who draw near (ἀντομένοισι) unwelcomely. Another similarity lies in the condition of the person approaching someone who is παλίγκοτος: whereas Polydeuces comes to Amycus for water he lacks (22.62–63), in the *Theriaca* Nic. tells his pupil to be aware of snakes specifically when one is sober (116).

**119 δάχματι:** a rare irregular variant of δῆγμα, found only in the *Theriaca*, and used throughout the poem (128, 152, 187, 274, 338, 654, 701 and 756); for Nic.'s preference for anomalous lexical innovation see Introduction 6.2.

**ὁλκαίην ἐπὶ σειρήν:** σειρή is generally used of any kind of rope or line (e.g. *Od.* 22.192, of plaited rope), but Nic. uses it metaphorically for the tail of a snake, which looks somewhat like a thick rope; cf. 385. Qualifying a snake's tail as a 'trailing rope' is a poetic periphrasis not found elsewhere; see Introduction 8.7.

**120 τοὔνεκα καί … ἵξεται αἶσα:** a line rich in aural effects, with -κα followed by καί, -ται followed by αἶ- and the alliteration of θανάτοιο and θοώτερος. The contrast between this stylistic richness and the morbid subject of the swift doom of death is striking. The line is largely repeated in 335: … θανάτου δὲ θοώτερος ἵξεται αἶσα. For the incongruence of θοώτερος and αἶσα see 129 n. and Introduction 6.9.

Why exactly it is that death comes more readily remains unclear. Females are known to be more dangerous, and appear to have thicker tails, which may have led Nic. (or his source) to believe that these two facts have a causal connection, viz. the thicker the snake's tail, the more dangerous its bite, or the stronger its body, the more powerful its venom. Less technically, it can also be suggested that the female is stepped on inadvertedly more easily because of its thicker tail.

**121** **θέρεος:** often used as a designation not for the summer as one of the four (e.g. Bion fr. 2.1–2 Reed) seasons, but to indicate the 'summer' half of the year. Together with χεῖμα the two seasons cover the whole year; Kidd 1997, 280. Nic. does, however, refer to spring in 74 and 380.

**δάκος:** see 115 n.

**ἐξαλέασθαι:** see 70 n. The inf. is used four times in the *Works and Days*, three times at line-end; it is not found in Homer. Other than a single occurrence in Aristophanes (*Eq.* 1080), Apollonius picks it up (4×, all at line-end) before Nic. The imperat. use of inf.'s in didactic poetry is particularly well illustrated in the 'Days'-section of the *Works and Days* (e.g. *Op.* 707, 727, 734–736, 744–746, 750, 758–759), which Nic. may have in mind here. Allan (2010) points out that imperatival infinitives focus more on the appropriateness of the procedure than on either the will of the speaker or the appeal to the hearer. In effect Nicander tells his addressee wat can be done best when one finds oneself in this sort of situation, rather than urging the addressee directly and personally (which would demand a finite verb, viz. an imperative) to act upon his command. According to Allan (2010, 207), *infinitivi pro imperativis* are often preceded by temporal or conditional clauses, which corresponds to Nicander's addition of θέρεος here, which fulfills the same function.

**122** **Πληϊάδων φάσιας:** the appearance of the Pleiades around the middle of May is commonly used as a designation for the beginning of summer, whereas their setting at the end of October marked the start of the winter; see Kidd (1997, 280) for the Pleiades as conventional dividers of the year. The use of the rising and setting of stars to designate time was as common in later times (cf. Archestr. 36.1 O-S = *SH* 166, φθινοπώρου, ὅταν Πλειὰς καταδύνῃ) as it was in Hesiod's (for the Pleiades cf. *Op.* 383, 572, 615, 619). Though mentioned as a practical aid for farmers (*Op.* 384, Arat. 267) and sailors (*Op.* 619, Arat. 42, 419) in particular, awareness of the seasons by means of astronomy proves to be useful for Nic.'s purposes as well. For a chart of the farmer's year based on the rising and setting of stars see West 1978, 253 and 376–381. For the Pleiades as a star group see Kidd, 1997, 274–275; for their mythical background see Gantz 1993, 212–218.

**δεδοκημένος:** a rare part., all but restricted to later epic (the only early instances being *Il.* 15.370 and [Hes.] *Sc.* 214). But for two exceptions in Nonnus, it is always found in this *sedes*. As Kidd (1997, 377) observes, the verb combines the act of waiting and watching at the same time. For δεδοκημένος used in particular with celestial signs cf. Arat. 559, where it is used, however, with a gen.; cf. A.R. 4.900.

Whereas Aratus urges his internal addressee to actually go out and watch the sky, Nic. uses the verb merely as an indication of time.

**122–123 ὑπὸ Ταύρου | ἀλκαίην:** for this particular astronomical position of the Bull as an indicator of the beginning of the farmer's year cf. Arat. 517 and Verg. *G.* 1.217. The exact location of the Pleiads in relation to the Bull is not without dispute. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 173) point at a scholion on Aratus, which states that the Bull is only head and shoulders and has no tail, but cf. Kidd 1997, 274. ἀλκαία is first found in Call. 54c Harder (177.23 Pf. = *SH* 259), where it is used of the tails of mice, although in the context they are portrayed as lions, but the noun is used to designate any kind of tail; cf. A.R. 4.1614 (the fishlike tail of the seagod Triton; see Livrea 1973a, 445), Ael. *NA* 5.39 et al. (a lion's tail), Opp. *H.* 5.264 (the tail of a whale). Σ A.R. 4.1613c: κυρίως [δὲ] ἡ τοῦ λέοντος οὐρὰ ἀλκαία λέγεται, ἡ εἰς ἀλκὴν παρορμῶσα. ἐν δὲ τῇ Κωμικῇ λέξειοὐ μόνον ἡ τοῦ λέοντος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἵππου καὶ βοὸς καὶ τῶν ἐμφερῶν, ὅσα ὥσπερ ἀλεξητηρίῳ τῇ οὐρᾷ χρῆται.

**123 ψαίρουσαι:** LSJ, unable to see how the meaning 'to graze' could be maintained when the verb was used intransitively, propose 'twinkle' as a translation here. Gow & Scholfield and Jacques, however, assume that despite ψαίρουσαι being intransitive here, the part. refers to the stars' location just below the Bull's tail, grazing it in an appearance of fixed movement, and not to their intrinsic movement, as LSJ's translation 'twinkle' implies; cf. Gow 1951, 111. Though not supported by the mss, the reading ὑπὸ Ταύρον (122) could be defended, as it provides ψαίρουσαι with a proper object, and makes good sense.

**ὀλίζωνες:** a rare comp. In *Il.* 18.519 the mss are divided between ὑπολίζονες (which finds some support when compared to [Hes.] *Sc.* 258 ὑφήσσων) and ὑπ' ὀλίζονες. As Rengakos (1993, 120) points out, Aristarchus chooses the latter, which explains the simple variant used by Callimachus (*Jov.* 72 ὀλίζοσιν, fr. 805 Pf. ὀλίζονας). Nic., probably following Callimachus, uses the simple ὀλίζων as well (cf. ὀλίζονα in 212), but retains the -ω- in the nom. plur. ὀλίζωνες here and in the acc. sg. ὀλίζωνα in 372, in both lines apparently for metrical purposes; cf. McLennan 1977, 109–110. Perhaps the adj. is Nic.'s way of varying on ἀφαυραί (Arat. 256), both adj.'s expressing the same idea (smaller ~ faint to observe). Nic.'s phrasing here is, unlike *Ther.* 19–20, markedly different from Aratus, as φάσις, ἀλκαίη, ψαίρω, ὀλίζων are only used here; Spanoudakis 2006, 52.

**124 ἀβοσκής:** only here. Cf. ἄκνημος σίτων in 116, which is used as a synonym, probably just for the sake of variation, one at line-opening, the other at line-end. Apparently the impact of a poisonous attack is strongest when both the victim and the attacker are fasting, but perhaps Nic. is merely thinking of the increased irascibility of hungry snakes.

**125 λοχάδην:** a unique adv. (cf. 21 n.), obviously derived from λοχάω, 'to lie in ambush' and explained by the *scholia* as ἐνεδρευτικῶς, πλαγίως, κρύφα (Σ *Ther*. 125b). Yet it is hard to explain the word from its context. The image of the brooding *dipsas*-snake, sleeping (ἰαύῃ) in its den, is hardly compatible with the idea of a snake lying in ambush, although a victim who accidently steps on it may think otherwise. Even though it is likely that an unfed snake, probably the more violent as she is eager to protect her children, is a dangerous enemy, such an accusation on behalf of Nic. shows once again the poet's eagerness to insist on omnipresent peril, even if the facts do not reflect such a situation.

**γωλεά:** a rare word, used only by Aristotle (γωλεόν, *HA* 603a6) and Lycophron (γωλεία, 376) before Nic.; for γωλε(ί)α as a typically abstruse word see De Stefani & Magnelli 2009, 615–617. It is used for cavities, and the scholia refer to them as αἱ καταδύσεις, αἱ ἐν κοίλοις τόποις γινόμεναι (Σ *Ther*. 125c), which implies not only holes but also hiding-places. The distinction between a φωλε(ι)ός and a γωλέος is not clear; cf. also 79 n. If the distinction was unclear in Nic.'s time as well, the juxtaposition of both words is no doubt an intentional sign of his awareness.

**126 λίπτῃσιν:** the only pre-Hellenistic occurrence of the verb is middle (Aeschylus, middle perf. λελιμμένος in *Th*. 355, 380), but Hellenistic poets use the act. (Call. fr. 54b.27 Harder = *SH* 257, A.R. 4.813, Lyc. 131, 353) as does Nic. here. The relation with Aeschylus is probably not by chance, as λελιμμένος is followed by a line in which reference is made to a hissing snake: Τυδεὺς δὲ μαργῶν καὶ μάχης λελιμμένος | μεσημβριναῖς κλαγγαῖσιν ὡς δράκων βοᾷ (A. *Th*. 380–381) 'But Tydeus, raging passionately and eager for battle, shouts like a serpent hissing at noon'. In the *Theriaca* it is the snake that is eager, not, however, to enter the battleground, like Tydeus, but to reach its feeding-ground. Nic. may well have had Aeschylus' snake in mind, which, as the scholia explain, is especially violent at noon when it is thirsty and hot (Σ A. *Th*. 381b, d).

**μεθ' ἑὸν νομόν:** the image of a snake going to its νομός is a strikingly rustic one as νομοί are usually associated with horses, cattle or sheep (e.g. *Il*. 6.511, 18.575, *Od*. 9.217).

**126–127 ἢ ἐπὶ κοῖτον … | … κεκορημένη:** an adaptation of *Od.* 14.455–456, … οἱ δ᾽ ἐπὶ κοῖτον, | σίτου καὶ κρειῶν κεκορημένοι, ἐσσεύοντο …, where Eumaeus and Odysseus have been served food by the servant Mesaulius. The allusion underlines Nic.'s portrayal of snakes as human beings, malignant perhaps, but at least with similar habits, reflected in similar actions and words; for such anthropomorphic depictions see Introduction 8.1.

**128 μή σύ γ᾽ ἐνὶ τριόδοισι τύχοις ὅτε:** cf. 98 where the encounter with snakes at a crossroads was put to use by obtaining powerful antidotal ingredients; see Introduction 5.6. The phrasing is perhaps borrowed from *Od.* 12.106, where Circe warns Odysseus to heed Charybdis: … μὴ σύ γε κεῖθι τύχοις, ὅτε ῥυβδήσειεν ('may you not be there when she sucks [it] down!', transl. Murray). The negative reputation of three-forked crossroads in Hellenistic literature may be significant here. In Call. *Cer.* 114 we find a disillusioned Erysichthon sitting ἐνὶ τριόδοισι, which seems to turn out metaphorically as a blind alley for him. Crossroads were associated with magic, and with Hecate in particular (Theoc. 2.36, Thphr. *Char.* 16 on which see Diggle 2004, 371), with beggars (Hopkinson 1984, 170) and loitering good-for-nothings (Mosch. 1.2); Nic.'s reference to them here does therefore not bode well.

**δάχμα:** see 119 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**πεφυζώς:** the perf. part. πεφυζότες appears four times in the *Iliad* (21.6, 528, 532 and 22.1), derived from πεφυγότες to fit the metre; *πέφυγα must be understood as the verb's older perfect, based on the noun φύζα; Chantraine 1191. The younger perfect πέφευγα appears in *Od.* 1.12 (πεφεύγοτες) and *Il.* 21.609 (πεφεύγοι). The only imitation before Nic. is the literal πεφυζότες (A.R. 2.1082), which makes Nic. the first to use the unfamiliar single πεφυζώς here.

**129 περκνὸς ἔχις:** the *echis* is a sand viper (*Vipera ammodytes*, Leitz § 23), with περκνός pointing at its normal colour, i.e. dusky or brown.

**θυίῃσι:** an epic subj. form of θυίω, which is a variant of θῡ́ω (both only in poetry), 'to rage', 'to seethe' (θῡ́ω [1] in Chantraine, 448). It is used particularly of the powers of nature, viz. storm (Hes. *Th.* 874, *Op.* 621) and sea (Hes. *Th.* 109, Anacr. 347.17 PMG), and of strong emotions (Pi. *P.* 3.33, A.R. 3.755). Interestingly, Nic. uses the verb here technically for a natural phenomenon, although in effect the snake's behaviour is presented as a strong emotion. Here the viper has escaped the dangerous bite of its female companion. It has not, however, escaped unscathed and is still raging with anger after it has received a blow from the female.

**ψολόεντος:** the incongruent use of masc. adj.'s for fem. nouns (here ἐχίδνης, the female of the ἔχις) is typical of Nic., occurring elsewhere in 120, 129, 229, 248, 284, 329, 502, 659, 759, 923–924. This Nicandrean oddity, already noticed by Volkmann (1854, 60–61) and Klauser (1898, 90) appears to be a stylistic element, wilfully applied time and again as a characteristic of Nic.'s style; see also Introduction 6.9.

**130** **θορνυμένου:** cf. 99 n. The rare verb was perhaps picked up from Herodotus (3.109), who uses it in a description of the mating habits of the ἔχις and the ἔχιδνα.

**θολερῷ κυνόδοντι:** the adj. alliterates well between θυίῃσι (129), θορνυμένου, and θουράς (131). The description of the snake's dirty fang, used here *pars pro toto* for the snake's four (or at least two) fangs adds to the vivid description of the fight between the female and the male; Jacques' preference for the v.l. θαλερῷ ('strong') here makes good sense too. Although κυνόδους is technically a dog's tooth, earlier writers use it for other animals too, e.g. for lions (Arist. *HA* 579b12), or horses (X. *Eq.* 6.8); Nic. is the first to apply the noun to serpents.

**131** **θουράς:** fem. adj. of θοῦρος, instead of the Homeric fem. θοῦρις. Apart from this line θουράς is only found in Lyc. 612. The regular adj. usually refers to violence, e.g. as an epitheton of Ares (*Il.* 15.127), said of the monster Τυφών (A. *Pr.* 356), or of a spear ([E.] *Rh.* 492); cf. *LfgrE*, 'impetuous, i.e. that rushes/leaps with violent impetus at the enemy'. In the *Alexandra*, however, this sense of violence is combined with a sense of lust, as the adj. refers to Diomedes' wife Aegialeia, the daughter of Adrastes. She, as a vengeance of Aphrodite, who had been wounded by Diomedes, was made an adulteress and later tried to kill her husband (Σ Lyc. 610). The reference is well chosen, because in Nic.'s use of the adj. both the violent female sexual passion and the looming killing of her mating partner are reflected. But whereas in the *Alexandra* Aegialeia fails in her attempt Nic.'s θουράς ἔχιδνα succeeds in bringing down her mate. In Nic.'s realistic world there is no mythical escape from danger. The only way to safeguard oneself is to pay attention to the teacher's lessons, because although "safety from deadly creatures is everywhere available" (Clauss 2006, 180), so is death ubiquitous.

Nic.'s knowledge of the story of Aegialeia in the *Alexandra* is not only apparent from his borrowing of Lycophron's *hapax legomenon*, but we can also surmise that the same story, as told by Antoninus (Ant. Lib. 37), goes back to Nic., as Gantz (1993, 700) suggests, probably with Nic.'s *Heteroeumena* in mind.

**ἀμὺξ ἐμφῦσα:** ἀμύξ is an adv., 'tearing' (ἀμύσσω, although Van Groningen [1977, 217] suggest α-copulativum with μύω). The mss have ὀδάξ (δάκνω) as v.l., supported by Touwaide (1998, 171), but not by Gow & Scholfield or Jacques. Both adv.'s have the same meaning, but the latter is preferred by Touwaide on the basis of Nic.'s use of the verb ὀδάξω in 306 and considering the fact that ἀμύξ is only once found elsewhere (Euph. *CA* 146, p. 55 = Van Groningen = 141 Lightfoot), although with a different meaning, as a synonym for μόλις. But this can hardly be considered a valid point, as time and again Nic. picks *hapax legomena* from previous authors: rarity seems to be an argument for rather than against Nic.'s choice. Yet, although not mentioned by Touwaide, the reading ὀδάξ finds some support in the Homeric ὀδὰξ ἐν χείλεσι φύντες (*Od.* 20.268); for ἐμφύω of setting one's teeth in something cf. Ael. *NA* 14.8 (of eels). The reading ἀμύξ is attested in the first century BCE, being discussed by the grammarian Philoxenus (fr. 482.12).

**ὁμεύνου:** 'bed-partner', a variant of the tragic ὁμευνέτης/ὁμευνέτις. ὁμεύνος is used earlier only by Callimachus in one of his lyric fragments (fr. 228.12 Pf.) and by the Hellenistic epic poet Maiistas in his aretalogy of Sarapis (Maiist. 3 = *CA* p. 69). In these instances the word applies to a queen (Arsinoë, although the papyrus is fragmentary) or a god (Isis). Nic.'s image is typically from a human perspective, as the slightly romantic euphemism of 'sleeping with someone' for sexual intercourse is hardly apt with regard to the mating habits of animals. For anthropomorphism in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.1.

**132 οἱ … τυτθοί … ἐχιῆες:** τυτθός, mainly used for children (e.g. *Il.* 11.223, A. *Ag.* 1606) is occasionally used for animals, e.g. Theoc. 19.5–6, where a bee is called a τυτθὸν θηρίον, and A. fr. 337 *TrGF*, apparently of a bird that has just hatched. The use of the adj. with a definite article, however, referring to animals that are still young, as opposed to their full-grown parents, is rare. The adj. is all but limited to poetry; cf. 755 n.

**μετεκίαθον:** a Homeric verb (5×), of which only the imperf. and aor. occur. It was picked up by Callimachus (*Dian.* 46) and used again by Apollonius (8×). Apart from A.R. 4.781 the verb is always used in the same *sedes*, i.e. starting in the second half of the third foot, conventionally followed by Nic. here. Generally the verb means 'to follow after', to be taken here as '(to proceed by) acting upon', translated by Gow & Scholfield as "avenge".

133 **ἀραιήν:** according to Spanoudakis (2006, 53) "'where the womb is at its thinnest point', not 'through the thin womb'". This makes good sense, although it does not evidently follow from the Greek.

134 **ἀναβρώσαντες:** this is the only instance of ἀναβιβρώσκω used literally for eating through something. In subsequent medical literature (e.g. Soranus, Galenus, Oribasius, Aëtius) the verb and the cognate noun ἀνάβρωσις are used e.g. in relation to ulcers for erosion and corrosion. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 173) point at the varying credence that is attached to both stories (i.e. the biting off of the head of the male viper by the female after mating and the young vipers eating through their mother's body). Herodotus records both (3.109), but Aristotle mentions neither of them (*HA* 558a25). Ps.-Antigonus' *Mir.* 21.4 Musso refers to the same story of the miraculous behaviour of the young vipers, but just like other later sources (Ael. *NA* 1.24, [Arist.] *Mir.* 846b18) discussion of the same phenomena may well be based on the *Theriaca*. Nic.'s choice for the more spectacular details of the ἔχις and the ἔχιδνα show his interest in exciting—although gory—details, rather than accuracy; cf. Jacques 2002, 92–93. For Nic.'s ostensible predilection for such details and the relation between the *Theriaca* and the paradoxographical tradition see Introduction 8.6.

**ἀμήτορες:** 'motherless'. For the *figura etymologica*, in combination with μητρός in the previous line, see Introduction 8.3.

135 **βαρύθει:** the verb βαρύθω is not previously found in the sense of being heavy because of an embryo, but Call. *Cer.* 130–131, αἱ δὲ βαρεῖαι, | χἄτις Ἐλειθυίᾳ τείνει χέρα χἄτις ἐν ἄλγει, seems to allow for such use; see Hopkinson 1984, 180. It is used metaphorically in *Il.* 16.519 (of a shoulder that feels heavy because of a wound) and in Hes. *Op.* 215 where ὕβρις oppresses the ὑβρίζων who bears it. Apollonius uses the verb four times, but never in a sense that is as literal as Nic.'s use of it for a snake that is heavy because she carries unborn young inside her. A.R. 2.47 (καμάτῳ … βαρύθοιεν) may have given Nic. the idea of applying a literal meaning to a verb that was previously only used metaphorically.

**ὑπὸ κύματος:** in *Od.* 5.320 and 393 the phrase is used, as one expects, of a surging wave of the sea. Nic.'s use is the more interesting when viewed together with βαρύθω, as this verb is used in an unusual literal sense here, whereas κῦμα takes an unexpected turn as well. Originally κῦμα refers to anything swollen, be it from pregnancy or otherwise. By using two well-known words in a new

context, the poet takes his readers by surprise as the primary interpretation needs reconsideration to fit the context.

**136 λεπυρήν ... γενέθλην:** 'shelled offspring', the adj. is probably a Nicandrean coinage, used again in 803. The combination is a poetic periphrasis of the eggs of the female viper, which are stately depicted by γενέθλη. This noun, all but limited to poetry, is used occasionally for animals as well, e.g. *h.Hom.* 27.10, where Artemis is said to kill the offspring of the animals on mountains and in woods.

**137–138** As Touwaide (1997, 202) points out, snakebites are more dangerous at the very beginning of the season, because it is then, after months of hibernation, that the snake has regained all its lethal powers to the full.

**137 ῥικνῆεν φολίδων ... γῆρας:** ῥικνήεις, a poetic adj. for ῥικνός, 'shrivelled', is only found here. The two sides of γῆρας (doffing the old skin and at the same time doffing old age) bring up the topic of rejuvenation again, already addressed in 31, on which see n.

**περί:** postpositively with φολίδων, a use of περί that is, however, not confined to poetry; cf. Smyth §1665 for this use in Attic prose; cf. Introduction 6.8. Alternatively, περί can be considered adverbial; see Spatafora 2007a, 118.

**138 νεαρῇ κεχαρημένος ἥβῃ:** with regard to structure (the part. between the adj. and the noun it governs) and meaning, the phrase looks like a variation of 62, which has ἀγλαύροισιν ἀγαλλομένη ποταμοῖσιν, not, however, said of a snake, happy with its new skin, but of a plant, delighting in water. Nic.'s personification of the snake that is pleased with its new skin after donning its slough not only conveys the snake's understanding of happiness but also its consciousness of growing older. For personification of animals, e.g. with respect to human emotions, see Introduction 8.1.

**139 σκαρθμούς:** the noun σκαρθμός is popular with Hellenistic poets, recalling two Homeric rarities: ἐύσκαρθμος (*Il.* 13.31) and πολύσκαρθμος (*Il.* 2.814), both referring to jumping. Among Hellenistic poets we find imitations in the form of the simple σκαρθμός (Lyc. 101, Call. fr. 60g Harder = SH 258, Arat. 281, A.R. 3.1260), next to the two compounds; cf. 350 n. and *Al.* 325. The word is mainly connected to the prancing of horses (at least in Homer, Callimachus, Aratus and Apollonius), but Nic. connects it to deer here.

**ἐλάφων:** see 141–144 n.

**ὀχεῆσιν:** ὀχέη (varying on the Homeric χειή, used for a snakehole in *Il.* 22.93–95) can be used for any kind of hole in which animals recede, cf. the hole of an ant (Arat. 956), or of a wren or robin (Arat. 1026). It is used for snakes, however, in Call. fr. 575 Pf., as it is here.

**ἀλύξας:** a poetic verb. This part. is always used at line-end in epic poetry. Its use here gives a Homeric ring to the line, although probably without referring to a particular *locus*.

**140 ἀνδράσ' ἐνισκίμψῃ:** recalling οὔδει ἐνισκίμφθη (*Il.* 16.612, 17.528) and οὔδει ἐνισκίμψαντε (17.437), all in the same *sedes* as in this line, used for a long spear fixed in the ground after having been thrown. Although the simple is used by Callimachus twice and once by Euphorion, the only other Hellenistic poet to reuse the compound verb is Apollonius, in the sense of darting (of love in 3.765, of the sun darting rays at dawn in 4.113), and particularly (in the Homeric *sedes*) in 3.153, of an arrow. Nic. uses the verb of the attack of a snake, darting venomous poison at its victim. The verb, with its Homeric echo of weaponry, gives the snake assault in this line a particularly grim touch: the snake's poison is not merely shown as being spitted, but as a missile that hits its victim ineluctably. For Nic.'s use of warlike images see Introduction 8.8.

**γυιοφθόρον:** according to Touwaide (1998, 171) the alternative reading θυμοφθόρον, well-attested in Homer, even in combination with a φάρμακον, is to be preferred. His objections are twofold: γυιοφθόρον is unique and it presents a concrete meaning, which makes it less obvious that Nic. would have used this adj. The first objection can be ruled out in the light of the mass of unique words in the *Theriaca* alone. The second point implies that a less concrete description seems to fit better from a poetic or aesthetic point of view. Nic., however, often refers to particular bodily afflictions (e.g. 730–733, 743–746), which would make a focus on the horrible wounds on concrete limbs more probable than the more poetic, but also more vague θυμοφθόρος.

**ἰόν:** the noun ἰός is commonly used both for 'arrow' and 'poison'. As we would expect, the word usually refers to poison in Nic.'s descriptions. But if ἰός is considered a synonym of βέλος, Nic.'s use is close to A.R. 4.113, where ἐνισκίμψασα is said of an arrow. Nic., perhaps as a pun on the double meaning of ἰός, may be thinking of Apollonius' line here. For another play of the double meaning of ἰός see Introduction 6.6 and 184 n.

**141–144** These lines, pointing out the enmity between snakes and deer, seem to describe an enduring state of hostility between the two, not based on individual encounters, but almost presented as a historical enmity of two peoples at war. As Spatafora (2007a, 119) points out, the enmity is widely attested in antiquity, although generally later than Nic. ([Opp.] *C.* 2.238–241, Opp. *H.* 2.288–294, Ael. *NA* 2.9, Aesop. 199, Plu. *De soll.* 24). It even becomes a metaphorical opposition between the noble-celestial deer and the ignominous-infernal snake in the Middle Ages; see Puech 1949, 17–60. The hostililty depicted by Nic. here is mirrored later in the poem by the enmity between the asp and the ichneumon (190–208), and between the dragon and the eagle (448–457).

**141** **κινωπησταῖς:** a unique variant of κινωπέτον, which is already rare itself; see 27 n. Somehow Nic. could not restrict himself to copying the rare Callimachaean word, but wanted to cap him by coining an even more noticable word; cf. Magnelli (2006, 188), who explains Nic.'s *hapax legomenon* as "still more recherché". κινωπησταῖς contains the same number of syllables as the slightly more usual κινωπέτοις, yet the -η- and the additional -σ- add to the effect of underlining the sense of the adj. to create a long sounding combination. Thus the alternative suffix chosen here aptly reflects the meaning of δολιχοῖσι κινωπησταῖς by stretching the noun a little further. As Jacques (2002, 4) points out, the coinage with this suffix is analogous to the similar ἑρπετόν-ἑρπεστής.

**κοτέουσι:** the idea of animals cherishing not just anger (cf. χολόων in 140), but even grudge is another example of Nic.'s portrayal of animals as human beings with human emotions; see Introduction 8.1

**142** **νεβροτόκοι:** only here. The idea for the coinage, however, may be related to the poet's use of ᾠοτοκοί in 136, which may have triggered the new formation. Although not formally a kenning-type noun, this adj. owes at least some characteristics to it. It is a slightly riddling description (though perhaps not to the extent of Hesiod's well-known kennings), referring to an animal, the adj. is used as a noun, the coinage is unique and the word adds to the poetic speech of the *Theriaca* as it functions as a more lofty variant of a regular designation of the animal. For formal criteria and discussion of kennings, particularly for animals, see Waern 1951, West 1978, 289–290, and Introduction 6.7. As the use of kennings is a marked feature of the *Works and Days*, Nic.'s use of similar coinages may well be in imitation of Hesiod's style, both as a way of pointing at his source of inspiration and of showing his ability to indulge in the same sort of poetic play.

**ζόρκες:** the word for deer is attested in many forms in Greek, δορκαλίς (e.g. Call. *AP* 12.102.2 = *HE* 1036 = 31 Pf.), δορκάς, δόρξ (e.g. Call. *Lav.Pall.* 91), δόρκων, ζορκάς (e.g. Hdt. 4.192), δόρκος and ἴορκος ([Opp.] *C.* 3.3, although ps.-Oppian uses different names for different animals), in addition to Nic.'s ζόρξ (e.g. Call. *Dian.* 97), here and in 42. For minor distinctions between the different nouns see Gow & Page 1965b, 155. All forms are found in poetry, which makes Nic.'s choice hardly more interesting from a poetic point of view. Together with ἐλάφων in 139 Nic. uses three different words for more or less the same animal, which shows the poet's pleasure in lexical diversity attested throughout the poem. As Nic. makes an effort in the *Theriaca* to repeat himself as little as possible the reader is confronted with an overwhelming stream of rarities, new coinages, variations, compounds and synonyms. Here, the three synonyms are probably used to surprise the audience with verbal colouring of an otherwise ordinary description.

But perhaps the context of these lines can give an additional explanation. *Ther.* 139–144 describe the state of permanent enmity between snakes and deer, with both parties as opponents. In this context a poet may try to capture his audience by giving a more colourful view of (one of) these opponents, in this case by calling the different variants of deer to the mind of the audience. Although such learned variants do not add to a more vivid description of a battle scene itself, they do contribute to a more colourful and therefore more poetic image of the events described by the poet.

**143** **ἰλυούς:** a variant of εἰλεός (Theoc. 15.9), ἰλυός (Call. *Jov.* 25), or εἰλυθμός (*Ther.* 285), 'lurking-place', 'den'. According to Magnelli (2006, 187–188) this passage is an intertextual reference to Call. *Jov.* 25, because of the borrowing of both ἰλυούς and κινώπετα, although the latter is slightly altered by Nic.; cf. 141 n. "It's all but surprising that a Callimachaean section concerned with reptiles impressed Nicander's imagination". By means of this reference to the *Hymn to Zeus* the reader is also confronted with Callimachus' more timeless approach to the existence of snakes, since in the hymn we are informed about an early era in which snakes already inhabited our world and made lairs for themselves. To an audience such a reference adds depth to the here-and-now approach of Nic.: snakes are not just a possible danger for the present, as they have been lurking in their lairs from mythical times on.

**144** **σμερδαλέῃ … ἀϋτμῇ:** for the *hyperbaton* cf. 15 n. and Introduction 6.8. In *Il.* 22.95 σμερδαλέος is used in relation to a verb to express the fearful staring of a snake (σμερδαλέον δὲ δέδορκεν), as opposed to e.g. *Il.* 2.308–309 (δράκων … | … σμερδαλέος), or *Od.* 12.91 (σμερδαλέη κεφαλή), where there is no connection

with a verb. According to Karanika (2009, 44) “the epithet *smerdaleon* is seen in early Greek literature as a standard epithet of monsters, as well as human beings, with intent to cause fear. This epithet underlines perception from the part of the viewer” (with reference to Lonsdale 1989); cf. Spatafora 2005, 243–244. Interestingly, in Homer σμερδαλέος is virtually only used by the primary narrator, which gives the adj. an objective connotation in the poetry of those imitating Homer. Although Karanika bases her argument on *Ther*. 161–167, the same point can be made about Nic.'s use of the adj. here. Instead of σμερδαλέος as used to convey fear based on visual confrontation, here the adj. is used of fear instilled through another sensation, viz. the sound of the deer's breath. In both cases the adj. expresses the perception from the perspective of the viewer; Karanika 2009, 44 n. 8. It is interesting, however, that Nic. inverts the Homeric image of the fearful snake from *Il*. 22.95, as here the snake has become a victim itself, burdened by fear from the deer's frightening breathing, the hunter turned into the hunted.

**145 νιφόεσσα … Ὄθρυς:** Othrys (cf. Hdt. 7.129) is a mountain south of the Olympus. Notwithstanding the fact that Othrys may have had snow-caps, the adj. νιφόεις seems to be used as an epithet of all high mountains (cf. *Il*. 18.616, *Od*. 19.338, Hes. *Th*. 117, Pi. *P*. 1.20, Posidipp. 118.3 AB = *SH* 705, Nic. *Ther*. 440, 502 et al.), without the snow being a specific point of attention; for the use if νιφόεις as an epithet rather than a proper qualifier cf. Spatafora 2005, 250. After describing the heat of the sun on the fields earlier on, Nic. does not fail to mention the contrast of the snowy heights of Mount Othrys here. In a poem without a narrative or personal emotions the importance of depicting rich images is not to be underestimated. Apart from the verbal/lexical richness of Nic.'s language part of the poem's attraction lies in the evocation of scenic images painted with contrasts; for Nic.'s use of contrasts elsewhere see 21–34 n. For the role of geography in the poem see Introduction 8.3.

As Spatafora (2007a, 119) points out, the connection between a snake and its habitat is not mentioned fortuitously, but is in fact a standard element in such descriptions. This of course points at a typical treatment of certain elements, and not necessarily at verified claims.

**καί:** for the problem of καί in Gow & Scholfield's division of the poem see 157–492 n.

**δυσπαίπαλος:** according to Maehler (2004, 114) a variation on the epic adj. παιπαλόεις which is used of mountains, mountain paths and rocky islands in Homer.

The compound adj. is used by Archilochus for valleys (βῆσσαι, fr. 190 *IEG*$^2$) that are difficult to traverse, but by Bacchylides for waves (κύματα, 5.26 Maehler), in the same sense; see Leumann 1950, 237. This verse and the following two go on to explain that Othrys' rugged mountain, full of crags and gullies, houses deadly serpents as well. Yet emphasis is put on the inaccessability of the site, expressed through words as δυσπαίπαλος here. Nic. has shifted his focus from the needs of the ploughman, the herdsman and the woodcutter—who are unlikely to visit Othrys' mountain crags—in the proem, to the snakes and their haunts themselves. Where Hesiod generally expresses information that is seemingly useful to Perses, the teacher painted by Nic. stays closer to the knowledge he wants to share, than to what might be of use to either his internal or his external addressees.

**146 φοινά:** a rare variant of the more common adj. φοίνιος, and a Homeric *hapax legomenon*. In *Il.* 16.159 the adj. refers to the colour of the blood-smeared jaw of a deer; cf. Papadopoulou 2009. Its second occurrence is in *h.Ap.* 362, where it is used as a noun denoting blood itself in the story where the snakelike monster Typhon, after having been wounded by the arrows of Apollo, brings up blood. Nic. uses the adj. in a new sense here and in 675 (though in 839 it is used in its basic meaning 'crimson-red', of flowers) by extension: 'red' (basic meaning), 'blood-red' (Homer), 'blood' (*h.Ap.*), 'causing blood, deadly' (Nic.). This is one of many instances where the reader is expected to interpret Nic.'s intended meaning by this sort of association.

**146–147 κοίλη τε φάραγξ … | … ὑλῆεν:** instead of simply mentioning the presence of snakes in Othrys' mountains, Nic. underlines the barrenness and inaccessability of the place by adding descriptive adj.'s and nouns. Such descriptions give the audience the impression that humans are at a disadvantage in such a place anyway, let alone when there are snakes to heed. The depiction of a desert landscape, full of places for snakes to hide, adds to the grim excitement Nic. tries to create. For such an atmosphere of omnipresent danger cf. 2 n.

**147 δίψιος:** normally 'thirsty' or 'dry, parched' (of objects), i.e. needing water. Nic. has shifted the meaning from 'undergoing thirst' to 'causing thirst'. Such shifts of meaning are not uncommon in Nic.; cf. the shift in φοινός from 'caused by blood' to 'causing blood' in 146.

**σήψ:** an animal known as *seps* appears twice in the *Theriaca*, once here, apparently as a snake, and once in 817, where Nic. has a lizard in mind. The former,

mentioned here, is not discussed separately in the part on snakes (157–492), unless it is the same creature as the σηπεδών, which is treated in 320–333. For the various approaches of its identification see Spatafora 2007a, 119.

**148 ἀλλόφατον:** only here, as an adj. derived from φαίνομαι. For Nic.'s indulgence in lexical innovation see Introduction 6.2.

**οἰαδόν:** 'alone', another unique adv., probably based on analogous formation of common epic adv.'s in Homer such as ὁμιλαδόν, ἰλαδόν, σχεδόν etc. Hellenistic poets tend to stick to reusing the standard adverbial endings in -ον. There are, however, some coinages among Hellenistic poets: εἰληδόν (Call. fr. 191.28 Pf., if restored correctly), ἐπωμαδόν (A.R. 1.738, 4.1770), πανσπερμηδόν (Nic. fr. 72.5 G-S) and three more in the *Alexipharmaca*: μετρηδόν (203), ὠρυδόν (222), μοσχηδόν (357). To the external addressee a new adv. ending in -δον must have sounded highly poetic. As shown, new coinages of this kind were very rare, and once again the lexical novelty detracts the reader from the contents. Chantraine (798) s.v. ὅμιλος points out that adv.'s in -δον usually indicate groups (ἰλαδόν, ἀγεληδόν). If such a value of this particular suffix was generally felt, then Nic.'s choice for creating such an adv. based on the adj. οἰός is striking, as the suffix collides with the meaning of the stem.

Alternatively it can be considered a clever variation of the Homeric οἰόθεν οἶος, reused by Apollonius, and by Aratus in οἰόθεν οὐδ' οἶος (*Phaen.* 55); see Spanoudakis 2006, 53.

**149 χηραμά:** see 55 n.

**150 λίθακάς:** following Gow & Scholfield. Jacques prefers the reading λιθάδας, which avoids taking the adj. λίθαξ as a noun, and which has Homeric precendents (λιθάδεσσι(ν), *Od.* 14.36, 23.193, imitated in A.R. *CA* 12.21, p. 8). Nic., however, may be following Arat. 1112 here (λιθάκεσσιν), which is a deliberate variation on Homer (Kidd 1997, 463 and Cusset 1999, 74–75). The adj. λίθαξ ('stony') is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Od.* 5.415 (λίθακι … πέτρῃ) and should be taken here as 'stony land'. For the reading λίθακάς we have evidence in a fragmentary papyrus of the epic poet Dionysius, author of the *Bassarica* (third century CE) who imitates Nic. with λίθακες τε καὶ ἕρμ[ (fr. $24^{r}$.3 Livrea); for ἕρμ- see next note.

**ἕρμακας:** 'heaps of stones'; ἕρμαξ, probably a coinage, is a poetic variant of ἕρμα, which is used for different kinds of rocks, e.g. sunken rocks, rocks used as weights for balance, or a large rock used as the starting-point of race track.

The only parallel is ἕρμ[ακες] as found in a fragment of the third century CE epic poet Dionysius (fr. 24$^{r}$.3 Livrea = 14$^{r}$ *GDRK*).

**ἐνναίοντες:** the use of ἐνναίω with acc. is very unusual, but found in some other Hellenistic poets as well, e.g. A.R. 1.1076, Κύζικον ἐνναίοντες Ἰάονες. In *Del.* 15 Callimachus has τῶ σφε καὶ ἰχθυβολῆες ἁλίπλοοι ἐννάσσαντο with σφε as object. Mineur (1984, 65) suggests that in Callimachus ἐνάσσαντο was meant instead (without a gemination of the ν, similar to that of the λ in ἔλλαχες), derived from νέω or ἐννέω, to avoid the awkward combination. But even if Callimachus had ἐννέω in mind instead of ἐνναίω, later authors may have understood him to have intended the latter, in which case they thought they were imitating him by constructing ἐνναίω with an acc.; cf. [Mosch.] *Megara* 36. If this is the case, Nic. could be partaking in a debate about grammatical peculiarities, not by means of prose treatises, but using signs within his poetry as a mode of discourse with his peers. Mineur's reference to Hesiod's use of ἐγκατατίτεσθαι with the acc. (*Th.* 487, 890, 899), as pointed at by West (1966, 84), is not a good parallel: in Callimachus and Nic. the verb does not express direction (which would warrant the use of an acc.), but rest, which asks for a dat.

151 **παυρότεροι:** a smaller variety of the *seps*, living on the ground, as opposed to those living in crags and gullies in the mountains.

**ἔμπυροι:** referring to the fiery red colour of the skin of this kind of *seps*, as opposed to the mountain-*seps*, whose colour varies, as is stated in 148–149. Gow & Scholfield's ἔκπυρος ('irascible') lacks such a clear opposition and is not supported by the mss; cf. Jacques 2002, 14.

152 **μεταμώνιον:** 'in vain', i.e. 'without consequences', an adj. restricted to poetry. From a human perspective 'in vain' has a negative connotation, but when Nic. points out that the snake's bite is not in vain, the expression becomes a euphemism for severe suffering, as is explained inmediately by the following ἀλλὰ κάκηθες. Such a depiction is in line with the poet's approach to snakes throughout the poem, as Nic. repeatedly emphasises the evil intent of poisonous creatures; see Introduction 8.1. According to some the adj. is derived from ἄνεμος, 'blown away by the wind', but in Nic. the word probably lacks such an original metaphorical connotation; see Rutherford 1992, 153 and Sens 1997, 199–200.

153 **δομήν:** an Alexandrian word for δέμας (both from δέμω), probably coined by Lycophron (334, 597, 783). It is likely that Nic. borrowed the word from Lyc.

597 (κύκνοισιν ἰνδαλθέντες εὐγλήνοις δομήν), together with the verb ἰνδάλλομαι, altering Lycophron's κύκνοισιν to κόχλοισι. To underline the contrast between Lycophron's clear-eyed, air-borne swans and Nic.'s lowly land-snails, αἴης is added emphatically at line-end.

154 **ἐγχλοάουσα:** one of several verbs of the same root employed in the *Theriaca*. In 576 and 917 the simple χλοάζω is used for sprouting buds, whereas Aristotle used the same simple for 'to be bright green' (*Mir.* 846b13); the latter meaning is expressed by χλοάω (30), or the compounded ἐγχλοάω, employed here.

**λοπίς:** 'scales' of fish (Ar. *V.* 790, *Al.* 467) or reptiles. A very rare word, but, going by its presence in Aristophanes, not a typically epic or poetic noun.

**περιμήκεα κύκλον:** imitating line-ends as περιμήκεα κοντόν (*Od.* 9.487), περιμήκει ῥάβδῳ (*Od.* 10.293, 12.251), περιμήκεα δοῦρα (*Od.* 12.443), in the same *sedes*; cf. Crugnola 1961, 145. In Homer the adj. refers to tools or weapons (spear, fishing-rod, staff) or tall trees, rocks, mountains. Here the adj. refers to the snake's coil, but the connotation is that the snake is very long, like a tall pole, once it uncoils.

155 **ἀμάθοισι μιγέντες:** placed chiastically with ἀλινδομένοι ψαμάθοισι. The two combinations are almost synonyms, with ψαμάθοισι echoing ἀμάθοισι. Magnelli (2002, 8 n. 13), however, may well be right in correcting the odd ψαμάθοισι into κονίῃσι.

156 **ἀλινδόμενοι:** placed between daggers by Jacques for no apparent reason, other than the fact that perhaps we would expect ἀλινδούμενοι when compared to Leon. Tarent. *AP* 7.736.2 (*HE* 2168); on the morphological variation see Magnelli 2006, 195 with n. 38. The verb is a well-attested variation of κυλινδόμενοι, which is impossible here because of the epic correption in the current state. According to Livrea (1973a, 412) ἀλινδόμενοι ψαμάθοισι is an imitation of A.R. 4.1463–1464 ἴχνια γὰρ νυχίοισιν ἐπηλίνδητ' ἀνέμοισιν | κινυμένης ἀμάθου, where the same verb is used for describing footsteps in the sand that have been effaced by the sweeping of the nightly winds. Interestingly, in Apollonius it is the wind that causes the disappearance of marks in the sand by its movement, whereas Nic. uses the same verb for snakes making marks in the sand with their wriggling. Cf. 266 n. where Nic. borrows again from this Apollonian line.

## 157–492 Part 1*a*: Kinds of Snakes

Through his description of the viper (129) and the *seps* (147), Nic. has arrived at the start of the central part of the poem, which consists of an extensive exposition of the particulars of different kinds of snakes and the wounds caused by their bites. The transition from the previous part of general precautions (21–156) to this next part is smooth, as the poet seems to proceed with the snake descriptions he is now going to give by means of association. Particular parts of the year to heed snakes (121) lead to particular places to watch out (145), followed by some of the snakes that are likely to occur at such locations.

In Gow & Scholfield's analysis of the poem (1953, 170) lines 145–156 are grouped with the central part of the poem on snakes (157–492), which makes sense when one considers that their division does not separate the viper (129) and the seps (147) discussed here from the descriptions of other kinds, which follow from 157 onwards. Yet this division, despite being followed by others (Touwaide 1997, 165) is odd when καί in 145 is considered, which clearly links that verse to the previous ones by stating that Othrys accommodates dangerous snakes too, i.e. in addition to the places mentioned previously.

Now that the poet has come to talk of the snakes themselves, apparently without a clear scheme, he proceeds by giving an orderly account of the various species. The division of the poem, however, is more likely to have been carefully planned and structured in advance. As Effe (1974a, 55) has shown (although making different choices in his structural analysis) the poem is certainly not a haphazard collocation of facts, but a carefully arranged structure, balanced by several parallels within the poem; see Introduction 5.

By presenting his carefully arranged material in a casual way Nic. closely resembles his predecessor Aratus, who achieves the same effect by presenting each new topic as if it came to him by association. As Fakas (2001, 69 ff.) points out, Aratus largely constitutes his poem in a way imitative of Hesiod, but where Hesiod's 'method' of composition is—at least partly—spontaneous, Aratus achieves the same effect by way of pseudo-associative composition. For pseudo-assocative composition in Hellenistic poetry see Introduction 5.7.

Lines 157–492 can be divided in:

157–189 The asp
190–208 The ichneumon and the asp
209–257 The viper
258–281 The *cerastes*
282–319 The *haemorrhoos*

320–333 The *sepedon*
334–358 The *dipsas*
359–371 The *chersydrus*
372–383 The *amphisbaena*
384–395 The *scytale*
396–410 The king of reptiles
411–437 The *dryinas*
438–447 The dragon
448–457 The dragon and the king of birds
458–482 The *cenchrines*
483–487 The gecko
493–496 second proem

### *157–189 The Asp*

The first snake treated is the deadly ἀσπίς, the asp or Egyptian cobra (*naia haje*). Its Greek name is a metaphor in itself, as the resemblance of the snake's swollen throat to a round hoplite shield gave the animal its name, well before Nic. (cf. Hdt. 4.191).

157 **αὐαλέῃσιν … φολίδεσσιν:** cf. A.R. 4.144 ἀζαλέῃσιν … φολίδεσσιν, of the monstrous snake guarding the Golden Fleece. If the reading is correct Nic. has changed the adj. ἀζαλέος (which he uses in 339) to the Hesiodic variant αὐαλέος (*Op.* 588), retaining the position of the Apollonian combination, but refraining from an exact borrowing. This alteration might have a pedantic touch, as αὐαλέος is used by Hesiod of a human skin (χρώς), whereas ἀζαλέος has a more general use in early epic, although the adj. is used of a leather shield of bull's hides in *Il.* 7.238–239.

**ἐπιφρικτήν:** 'bristling on the surface'. The adj. is not found elsewhere, but the rare compound verb ἐπιφρίσσω is used by Empedocles (fr. 83.2 DK) for hedgehogs. Whereas the simple φρικτός and φρίσσω are often used metaphorically, not so much emphasising the physical effect, but rather its cause, e.g. cold (Hes. *Op.* 512), fear (S. *Tr.* 1044), joy (S. *Aj.* 693), or contempt (*Il.* 24.775), the compound is used more specifically for rough surfaces, as in Empedocles' reference to the hedgehog, or Nic.'s reference to the asp's back, bristling with withered scales.

158 **φοινήεσσαν:** the adj. is not referring to the colour of the asp, which is discussed by Nic. in 172 ff., but seems to be a variant of φοινός; cf. 146 n. The original meaning 'red' (as well as derived meanings as 'bloody' and 'causing

blood') is out of place, since in 187–189 Nic. states that the asp's bite, lethal as it may be, does not cause a visible wound. The adj., despite the gory image it evokes to the reader, is probably best interpreted as 'murderous', as Gow & Scholfield do.

**ἀμυδρότατον:** probably 'slow' in movement; for this odd meaning here see Jacques 1969. This additional piece of information does not serve to point out that this snake is not to be feared, or moves like the proverbial snail. It rather underlines the contrast with the situation described in the following lines, where it suddenly moves and adopts a frightening pose. The adj. only reflects the silence before the storm, at least as presented by the poet. The superl. intensifies the effect: this seems to be the most sluggish snake of all, but it can inspire dread through its mere move, known as it is for its sudden action.

**δάκος:** cf. 115 n.

**159–160** An interpolation, according to Gow & Scholfield, and to Jacques, who is probably right in thinking that these verses have been inserted by a later author to explain why it is exactly that this particular snake is the most sluggish of them all (2002, 14). Moreover, these two lines are missing in two of the manuscripts, Π and M; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 26 and Jacques 2002, cciii–ccvi and 14. The interpolator borrowed both his explanation and *Ther.* 265 from the description of another snake in the *Theriaca*. From a didactic point of view some kind of explanation for Nic.'s remark in 158 is welcome, but from a narrative point of view the superl. has its own function in the passage; see 158 n.

**161** **σμερδαλέον:** used in the same *sedes* by Apollonius (A.R. 4.154) to describe the frightful head of the monstrous snake guarding the Golden Fleece. Among other elements Nic. borrows from his source (A.R. 4.153–155) here are the appearance of the snake's bristling scales (157) and the threatening coiling pose (166). The association of the adj. with snakes is common; cf. A.R. 3.1215, σμερδαλέοι … δράκοντες. For the use of the adj. cf. 144 n. Despite the repeated references to the snake's sluggish movement and dull look, the audience should not forget that this is a fearful animal, radiating dread through its appearance. This adds to building up tension: the animal moves very slowly, yet inspires the potential victims—the external addressees—with fear. The reader, drawn to the snake through the poet's depiction, is waiting for this monster to attack, but cannot do anything but read on.

**162 νωχελές:** this second reference to the asp's sluggishness (cf. ἀμυδρότατον, 158) enhances the first one. It is as if the poet, after having mentioned the dreadful appearance of the snake (σμερδαλέον ... δέμας, 161), once again tries to make sure his audience has the right picture in mind and that the right images have sunken in. This time we see the snake moving slowly, making its path using the coils of its body.

**ὑπναλέῳ ... ὄσσῳ:** the separation between the adj. and the corresponding noun is unusually large; for such contrived use of word-patterning see Introduction 6.8. Magnelli (2006, 190) points at the intertextual relation between this passage (cf. 157–158) and A.R. 4.143–145, where the snake guarding the Golden Fleece is described: "though looking sleepy and sluggish, the cobra never falls properly asleep, just like the tireless Apollonian monster".

**163 αἰέν ... ἐνδυκές:** the calm before the snake's sudden movement, already expressed in 158 and 162, is underlined twice in this line: the snake moves slowly and always looks sluggish and drowsy. The adverbial use of the neut. adj. ἐνδυκές is previously only found in A.R. 1.883, a variant of the common Homeric form ἐνδυκέως. The meaning is not exactly clear: in Homer the adv. expresses eagerness and this meaning also seems to apply to Apollonius' use, ὧς ἄρα ταίγε | ἐνδυκὲς ἀνέρας ἀμφὶ κινυρόμεναι προχέοντο, of the Lemnian women rushing sorrowfully towards the Argonauts as they are about to leave; cf. Ardizzoni 1967, 216. LSJ explains the word as a synonym for συνεχές, but both Gow & Scholfield and Jacques take the word to mean 'fixed' in combination with ἐπιλλίζουσα, 'to wear a fixed look', unless they are leaving the word untranslated and derive their translation from the part. only. But perhaps it is better to retain the meaning Apollonius intends here, in which case Nic. expresses that the snake *likes* to move slowly with a drowsy eye, or prefers to spend its days half asleep, a meaning that is applicable in 263 and 283 as well. Nic. uses the adv. in a context of quiet, slow behaviour of the snake, whereas in Apollonius ἐνδυκές is used in a particularly lively and crowded setting, when the women of Lemnos, weeping loudly, press around the Argonauts who are about to leave.

**ἐπιλλίζουσα:** as Gow & Scholfield point out (1953, 173) the verb cannot mean 'wink' or 'blink' (cf. Gow 1951, 102) here, as snakes have no eyelids. Jacques (2002, 15) concurs with this observation and translates "regarder fixement". While such an explanation certainly makes sense, a less prosaic interpretation can be given if the verb is not taken literally as the act of winking, but as 'mocking' or 'casting eyes of mockery', for which A.R. 1.486 and 4.389 provide parallels.

The snake, conscious of its dreadful appearance and power, moves lazily about, casting a mocking glance at the general you, aware of its superiority. Though it may look sluggish, no-one can escape its assault if it wants to attack. For such human emotions in descriptions of snakes and Nic.'s personified portrayal of them see Introduction 8.1.

**164** After the introductory description of the asp, with specific emphasis on its slowness and sluggish but dreadful appearance, the external addressee, waiting for the action to come, is signalled to pay attention. Schneider (1962, 99) points at the fast change in the snake's behaviour, due to the sudden disruption described by the poet in 161–167, but does not notice the pointed contrast between this rapid change and the elaborate total of seven lines spent on its description.

**ἀθρήσῃ:** used synaesthetically of both perceiving a thud with the ears and bright light with the eyes. LSJ unnecessarily reduces the poetic effect by giving the extended translation 'perceive'. The phenomenon is not uncommon in Greek poetry. On A. *Th.* 103 (κτύπον δέδορκα, close to Nic.) Hopkinson (1984, 63) remarks: "The perceptions of the eye seem clearer and more vivid than those of the ear: hence the language of sight is graphically employed"; cf. A. *Pr.* 21, S. *OT* 186 and 473. For discussion of such *sensus pro sensu* metaphors see Stanford 1936, 47–62. Other instances, interchanging sight and smell, are E. *Cyc.* 153, Ar. *Av.* 1715, Theoc. 1.149, 7.50, 10.41. As Bulloch (1985a, 213) points out, ἀθρέω was considered an epicism by the Hellenistic poets, which is why almost all occurrences are aor. tense forms (cf. Call. *Lav.Pall.* 102, A.R. 4.467, Theoc. 11.24, 15.78, Ant. Sid. *HE* 616, Pl. Jun. *APl* 160.3 = *FGE* 668, Call. *AP* 6.148.4 = *HE* 1128 = 55 Pf.).

**νωθρή ... ὕπνον:** another metaphor. The heavy (νωθρή, Jacques), or perhaps lazy (νωθῆ, Gow & Scholfield) sleep that had hitherto held the snake is 'thrown off', as if it were a blanket under which the asp was hiding. The snake is more or less depicted as if it has been lying in ambush, hiding under its veil of sleep. The image fits well with the previous verses: Nic. has been building up a scene of ostensible rest, although the reader may have been waiting for something to happen. Now, quite suddenly the snake starts to move.

**ῥέθεος:** either 'body' (see 721 n.), or 'face', as in e.g. Call. fr. 67.13 Harder and A.R. 2.68. Both meanings make good sense, picturing sleep as lying over the snake's body (as Gow & Scholfield and Jacques take it) or more particularly over its face.

**166 τροχόεσσαν ἅλων:** the ἅλως has been mentioned before in 29 (λιστρωτὸν ἅλω δρόμον) and 113 (ἀλώϊα ἔργα) of a circular threshing floor, but the basic meaning seems to be 'anything round', here said of the circular coil of the asp, but in e.g. Ael. *NA* 3.16 of a bird's nest. With hindsight Nic.'s warnings to watch out for snakes when you are near a ἅλως gets an ironical flavour.

**167 λευγαλέον … ἀείρει:** from a narrative point of view it is interesting to see that in describing the serpent's appearance first the body is described and then the head. This order applies both to the snake at rest (157–163) and the revived snake after it has thrown off sleep (166–167), as first the circular coiled tail is described, followed by the fearsome head here, towering above the body. This visual way of depiction increases the tension for the external addressee, who can follow the poet's eyes through reading; see 720 n.

**168 κύντατον:** originally a superl., accompanying κύντερος, a comp. formed from the noun κύων. Literally the adj. thus translates as 'most dog-like', which is not impossible when Nic. is discussing the length of the asp. Homer uses the adj. to refer to a supposed personal quality of dogs, i.e. being 'shameless', rather than to their physical appearance; cf. Call. fr. 54c.30 Harder (*SH* 259 = 177 Pf.) for unabashed mice behaving κύντατον and fr. 75.4 Harder for κύον as the (self-) address of someone showing shameful behaviour. But the adj. was used to denote things of which the presence was generally 'horrible' from early on (*h.Cer.* 306), therefore we need not assume that a close connection to dogs was felt in this adj. in Nic.'s time. The similarity between Nic.'s line and *h.Cer.* 306 (ποίησ' ἀνθρώποις καὶ κύντατον, οὐδέ τι γαῖα), with κύντατον and γαῖα/αἶα in the same *sedes* may indicate that Nic. was thinking of this line indeed, rather than of the previous occurrence of κύντατον in *Il.* 10.503. In that case Nic. presents his audience with an interesting reversal: in the Homeric hymn mankind has to suffer a horrible year because the earth will not provide anything. In Nic.'s world mankind has to suffer just the same, but this time it is because the earth provides (ἔτρεφεν) a horror. Either by withholding or by providing, mankind is subject to whatever the earth yields. For such intertextual play see Introduction 7.3.

**169 ὀργυιῇ μετρητόν:** the double spondee helps to underline the size of the snake, which is about 1,77 metres; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 224.

**169–170 περιβάλλεται εὖρος | ὅσσον:** Gow & Scholfield chose the reading περιφαίνεται, annulling Nic.'s possible reference to A.R. 1.371, σκάπτον δ' αἶψα κατ' εὖρος, ὅσον περιβάλλετο χῶρος. Both in Apollonius' and Nic.'s text the function

of εὖρος is ambiguous, as it can be taken either as subject or object, in which case the snake is to be supplied as subject. According to Mooney (1912, 94) εὖρος should be taken as the subject, but we can also surmise that the poet deliberately pointed out Apollonius' ambiguity by reusing the problematic word himself.

**170–171 ὅσσον … λεόντων:** although similes are not very frequent in the *Theriaca*, occasional appearences like this one may distinguish the poem from comparable prose treatises. The thickness of the snake is compared to a spear as polished by a carpenter. The simile seems to serve a didactic purpose, visualising particular characteristics in an easily understandable way, but the rarity of αἰγανέη (see next n.) reveals the poet's other purpose; Schindler 2000, 66–67. Sistakou (2012, 204) points at a possible pun, related to the normal meaning of ἀσπίς, i.e. 'shield' (the eponymous snake's name being an ossified metaphorical *pars pro toto* centered on the cobra's shield-like hooded neck), thus comparing the thickness of a shield to that of a spear. Similes in the epic tradition are not seldom drawn from the familiar world of everyday life (cf. Rutherford 1992, 75), a tradition followed by Nic. here, who depicts an artisan. Interestingly the lion, mentioned in 171, itself frequently an element of similes (*Il.* 3.23–26, *Od.* 4.335–339, 791–792, 6.130, 17.126–130 etc.; references in Garvie 1994, 115) is included in Nic.'s simile as well, albeit not as the *secundum comparationis*. The bull is an element of similes in *Il.* 21.237 and *Od.* 21.48, which gives depths to its appearance here: by mentioning lions and bulls in a simile Nic. may be indirectly referring to the simile as a Homeric figure. Although this simile instantly recalls a Homeric simile, the phrasing does not follow the regular Homeric pattern typically starting with ὡς (δ') ὅτε (*Il.* 2.147, 2.209, 3.33, 4.130 etc.). Yet instances such as *Il.* 5.770 and 23.517, both similes starting with ὅσσον at line-opening, suggest a Homeric origin for Nic.'s simile here; for similes in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.7.

**170 αἰγανέης:** a light hunting-spear. The word is found five times in Homer, but apart from two occurrences in Alcid. Rhet. (fr. 5.75) and Diosc. Hist. (fr. 5b. 40), evoking Homer, the word is only found in A.R. 2.829 before Nic. If the word describes a particular sort of javelin, then it is questionable whether Nic.'s comparison was of any use to his audience. Probably the word is used here for its rarity rather than for being an apt comparison to describe the thickness of this particular snake. The didactic advantage of such a comparison is thus less apparent, and betrays that the poet has other reasons for its inclusion; see Schindler 2000, 66–67.

**δορατοξόος … τέκτων:** the adj. is only found here, varying on the more common δορυξό(ο)ς (e.g. Ar. *Pax.* 447). For the presence of artisans in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.2 and 8.7.

**171 εἰς ἐνοπήν:** 'sound', 'roaring'; all but limited to lyric and epic poetry. This line is somewhat loosely connected to the previous one, as Nic. mentions neither fight nor hunt. There is an elliptic *hypallage*, as the spear is meant to be thrown at the animals, not at the sounds they utter; cf. Introduction 6.9, and 2, 86, 649, 880 for other instances of Nic.'s use of *hypallage*. The epic ring of αἰγανέῃ, evoking a context that is not one of everyday, fits the hunt on bulls and lions, which must have been les common than hunting for birds or more common game.

**βαρυφθόγγων τε λεόντων:** at line-end in *h.Ven.* 159. To the bulls, mentioned first, lions are added, which are not only more exotic, but also evoke the more timeless world of the Homeric hymn from which they are copied, including their epithet. Bacchylides (9.9 Maehler) corroborates the use of βαρυρφθόγγος as an apt adj. for the roar of lions. When the context of *h.Ven.* 158–159 is considered, however, the lions in the hymn are not roaring at all: αὐτὰρ ὕπερθεν | ἄρκτων δέρματ' ἔκειτο βαρυφθόγγων τε λεόντων. The fierce lions are in fact skins that cover Anchises' bed, after they have been killed by him in hunting; see Faulkner 2011, 120. For such intertextual play in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 7.3.

**172 ψαφαρός:** according to White (1987, 16) J. Schneider's alteration ψαφαρή is unnecessary, as Nic.'s *inconcinnitas* is intentional. For other instances of Nic. treating a regular adj. as an adj. of two endings see Introduction 6.9 and cf. Gow 1951, 97 and Hopkinson 1988, 144. White (1987, 16, 36) and H. Schneider (1962, 119) signal *inconcinnitas* as a typical element of Nic.'s style, but the phenomenon does not seem to be a widespread feature of Hellenistic poetry in general. Although Jacques (2002, 15) does not admit a case of *inconcinnitas* here, he does retain αἰόλος in 173. Olson & Sens (2000, 173) point out that the adj., first attested in A. *Th.* 323 became popular with learned Hellenistic poets, cf. *Ther.* 179, 262, 369, *Al.* 353, Eratosth. *CA* 16.5, p. 62, Rhian. *CA* 76.1, p. 21, Euph. *CA* 50.3, p. 39 (70 Lightfoot).

**173 μηλινόεσσα:** 'like a yellow quince'. Only here, adding a new variant to μήλινος (*HP* 9.18.1) and μηλινοειδής (*HP* 6.2.8, 7.3.1) as used by Theophrastus. For Nic.'s liking for coining adj.'s in -όεις see Introduction 6.2.

**174–175** **ὑπὸ βώλῳ | Αἰθιόπων**: the reference to the soil of the Aethiopians probably serves to point out the etymological connection with αἰθαλόεσσα. For Nic.'s keenness on such etymological play see Introduction 6.6.

**175–176** **οἵην … | … ἄσιν**: the colour of the Aethiop soil (in which the snake has apparently been writhing and with whose dirt it is coloured) is likened to the colour of the mud that is washed up by the Nile. Despite the five lines dedicated to the description of the asp's colour, the pupil can hardly feel confident about future identification of the snake in question.

**175** **πολύστομος**: first used here as an epithet of the Nile. Jacques (2002, 16–17) chooses the *lectio difficilior* πολύστονος, which, although better attested, makes less sense. His parallels mainly refer to dangerous waters, such as the open sea or the Hellespont, but the Nile does not really compare to them. In addition, Jacques argues that πολύστομος is much more banal, but it is hard to see why the adj., being quite original and apt, should be qualified as such. For Nic.'s use of epithets like this as an imitation of early epic see 59 n.

**176** **ἄσιν**: 'mud', a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 21.321) in the same *sedes*. The high-blown Homeric context (threats about the burial of Achilles under a muddy layer of silt) is exchanged for a different context altogether, a frequent phenomenon within Nic.'s reuse of Homeric rarities.

**177–178** The order of the elements treated here adds to the tension: first the snake's brow is described, delaying the centre of attention, then the horrible red eye at the end of 178. For Nic.'s focus on sight, and the emotive impact of frightening stares or evil red eyes cf. *Ther.* 163–164, 227–228, 292–293, and 457; see also Spatafora 2005, 245.

**178** **ὑπαιφοινίσσεται**: the use of ὑπαί for ὑπό is found occasionally in epic (6× in Homer) and tragic poetry, but the preverbial use of ὑπαι- is much rarer. The only previous example is ὑπαιδείδοικεν (*h.Merc.* 165), which may have served as an example. The result is a highly poetic verb that forms a marked contrast with the plain description of the snake's appearance. In 720 Nic. uses the more regular ὑποφοινίσσονται, perhaps due to metrical restraint, but probably to achieve maximum lexical *variatio* as well. The red eye, a fierce and frightening sight, recurs in 228. As Gow (1952b, 420) points out: "the power of the snake's eye is constantly mentioned from Homer (*Il.* 22.95) onward, and the word δράκων was derived in antiquity, no doubt rightly, from δέρκομαι". A similar case has been made for ὄφις and ὀφθαλμός/ὀφθῆναι.

**ὄθμα:** according to Hesychius an Aeolic form, but it is not improbable that Nic. considered it a pseudo-archaic noun. The dissimiliation of the first -μ- in ὄμμα is not found in Homer or in other early poets and is likely to be a hypercorrection (instead of *οπμα, cf. ὄππατα in Sapph. fr. 112.3 Voigt); alternatively a reshaping with -θμα has been suggested (Beekes 1077). It is first attested in Callimachus, who uses it quite often (frr. 1.37, 63.9, 67.21, 186.29 Harder et al.), although only in the Ionic *Aetia*, not in e.g. *Lav.Pall.* 82 or *Cer.* 52; Bulloch 1985a, 190. Nic. is a clear follower (*Ther.* 178, 443; *Al.* 33, 243). The noun is not found elsewhere, except for references in later grammarians (Hdn. *Peri orthographias* 3.2.558.16; Orion, *Etymologicum* ο 124.16; Hsch. ο 151.1); see Introduction 6.3.

**179–180** Focusing on three characteristics of the asp: (i) its upright defence position, its body hovering over its coil, (ii) its broadly swollen neck, expressed by the rare compound ἀναπίμπραται, and (iii) its threatening hissing. Here too, as in 177–178, the order of the elements treated adds to the tension as we follow the didactic teacher's description that starts from the ground up to the neck, to end with a focus on the snake's mouth as the source of its unnerving sound.

**181** **ἄϊδα:** the use of Hades as a direct object, substituting 'death', is occasionally found in post-Homeric poetry, e.g. Pi. *P.* 5.96 (λαχόντες ἀίδαν), A. *Ag.* 667 (Ἅιδην πόντιον πεφευγότες). A case could be made for E. *Med.* 980–981 (ξανθᾶι δ' ἀμφὶ κόμαι θήσει τὸν Ἅιδα | κόσμον αὐτὰ χεροῖν), where Ἅιδα is usually considered a Doric gen., e.g. by Mastronarde (2002, 329). Among Hellenistic poets it is found in Arat. 299 (ὀλίγον δὲ διὰ ξύλον Ἄϊδ' ἐρύκει) and A.R. 4.1510 (ἐς Ἄιδα γίγνεται οἶμος).

**προσμάξηται:** a rare compound, expressing deliberate contact between a body and an object. In Theoc. 12.32 it is used of pressing sweet lips to other lips, i.e. kissing, and in 3.29 it is said of the love-in-absence flower that is supposed to stick to one's arm. In Lyc. 783 the verb is used less literally for mastigation (ἑκουσίαν σμώδιγγα προσμάσσων δομῇ), i.e. dealing a weal to one's body. Other compounds are sometimes used metaphorically, e.g. Theoc. 17.37 (ἐσεμάξατο, of Aphrodite imparting her charms), but usually there is a reference to physical contact. Nic.'s use, 'meting out Hades to approaching wayfarers', retains the physical contact between the snake and the victim, but substitutes the physical result with the gloomy metonymy of Hades.

**182** **πίσυρες:** Aeolic for Attic τέτταρες; see e.g. Hainsworth 1988, 263. But in Nic., like in other Hellenistic poets, the word is to be considered a Homerism (6× in Homer), not a common dialect form. Before Nic. (here and in 261, 710

and *Al.* 148) the word is used by Callimachus (*Dian.* 105), Aratus (478, 722) and Apollonius (1.671, 2.1110, 3.222, 1367). Nic. may have had Apollonius' play on *Od.* 5.70 in mind: Homer speaks of four springs in a row, flowing with bright water. In 3.222 Apollonius adopts the image but portrays the springs as carrying milk, wine, fragrant oil and water. Nic, in turn, borrows the marked Aeolic form, but shockingly replaces the bountiful springs with the dirty fangs of a snake, containing neither water nor delicacies, but poison.

**κοῖλοι:** here the fangs are said to be hollow, whereas in 184 Nic. refers to them as ἰοδόκοι, 'containing poison'. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 174) explain that the poison is not contained in the fang at all, but Nic.'s contradictory statement implies that he did not care about the exact details. Perhaps ἰοδόκοι in 184 should be taken with γναθμοῖς in 183.

**183 δολιχήρεες:** as a variant of δολιχοί this is another (cf. 50 n.) lengthened adj. introduced by Nic. Apart from underlining the length of the snake's frightening fangs by an extra syllable, Nic. may be echoing the Homeric δολιχήρετμοι, 'with long oars', which may be an invocation of excessive length. For the spondaic line-end see 20 n. and Introduction 6.11.

**184 ἰοδόκοι:** a clever pun, as in Homer (*Il.* 15.444, *Od.* 21.12, 60) and subsequent poets the adj. is used as an epithet for a φαρέτρα, 'quiver', containing arrows. Nic., referring of course to the second meaning of ἰός ('poison'), has reused the word in its Homeric *sedes* but with the meaning 'containing poison', an apt adj. for poison fangs. The emphatic placement in an enjambment, followed by a sense pause, underlines the dread of the information. The overt reference to a piece of armour is yet another oblique suggestion of dangerous snakes being at war with their human opponents, on which see Introduction 8.8.

**186 ἐχθρῶν … ἐμπελάσειε:** this is one of the rare occasions where the poet illustrates his dread from a more or less personal point of view. From a strictly didactic viewpoint the verse does not give new information—the danger of the asp has been illustrated well—but it is one of the few instances where the poet makes a slight but noticeable empathic personal comment, refraining from his persistent detachment. As Spatafora (2005, 241) comments: "Il poeta interrompe la trattazione con una intrusione empatica, potenziando la tensione verso una orrorosità esasperata". But the inclusion of the verse may serve another purpose as it casually foreshadows the battle between the ichneumon and the asp. After a cursory mention of the enemies of the poet here, albeit a mere topos, lines 190–208 cover one of the enemies of the snake. The strict

opposition between humans and poisonous animals, which so far was maintained, is expanded here as the enemies of both parties enter the frame as well. The phrasing calls to mind Call. *Cer.* 116–117, Δάματερ, μὴ τῆνος ἐμὶν φίλος, ὅς τοι ἀπεχθής, | εἴη μηδ᾽ ὁμότοιχος· ἐμοὶ κακογείτονες ἐχθροί. Other instances of fervent prayers for oneself or friends, as given by Hopkinson (1984, 171–172) are *inter alia* Hes. *Op.* 270–271, Call. *Jov.* 69, *Dian.* 136–137, Ov. *Fast.* 4.116, to which D.P. 740–742 and Cat. 63.92, *procul a mea tuos sit furor omnis, era, domo* can be added; Verg. *G.* 3.513, *di meliora piis, erroremque hostibus illum!*, contains a direct of Nic.'s imprecation; see Thomas 1988b, 137–138, and Introduction 9.2. As such, Nic.'s exclamation should not be considered a real desire, but an apotropaic topos, expressing strong emotion.

**καρήασιν ἐμπελάσειε:** a violent image in which the neutral verb ἐμπελάζω 'to approch' is euphemistically used for the horrifying attack of a snake darting at its victim's head; cf. Dionysius Periegetes' comment on the Massagetes, ἀνέρες, οἷς μήτ᾽ αὐτὸς ἐγώ, μήθ᾽ ὅστις ἑταῖρος | ἐμπελάσαι· μάλα γάρ τε κακοξεινώτεροι ἄλλων (741–742).

187 **δάχμα:** see 119 n.

188 **καμάτου δ᾽ ἄτερ:** the expression 'without toil' sounds markedly positive when used of a man who is about to die, but the effect of this particular kind of painless snakebite is attested elsewhere; see Spatafora 2007a, 121–122.

189 **ὑπνηλὸν δ᾽ ἐπὶ νῶκαρ:** both the adj. and the noun are first occurrences, although νωκαρώδης is found in Diph. fr. 18.7 K-A. The meaning seems to be close to 'coma'; Schwyzer (518.5) suggests that the root νωκ- is the same as νεκ- in νεκρός.

**βιότοιο τελευτήν:** a line-end borrowed from Homer (*Il.* 7.104, 16.787) but slightly adapted. In Homer the end of life comes in sight (φάνη βιότοιο τελευτή) and is thus presented more or less as an entity that stands outside of the person to whom it applies. In Nic., however, the end of life does not appear by itself, but is explicitly brought (ἄγει) by the coma. The depiction of this kind of death is somewhat odd, as it is the coma that brings about death, not the wound itself. The snake's attack is depicted as almost harmless: no bite, no swelling, no pain, just a coma. After the way Nic. has built up the picture of this dangerous snake the end, as presented by the poet, comes as a surprise.

### *190–208 The Ichneumon and the Asp*

After the elaborate description of the viper's attack a digression follows (190–208), in which the ways of the ichneumon (something like a weasel or a mongoose) are described, a natural enemy of the viper; for digressions as structural elements in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 5.8. At first sight the digression seems to be a spontaneous addition of the poet, brought about through association. Effe (1974a, 57), however, has shown that the story of the ichneumon and the *aspis* is not only carefully placed in the middle of the first group of snake descriptions, consisting of the *seps*, the *aspis* and the *echis*, but that this story is parallelled by a similar story (343–358) that shows the same placement in the middle of another section. The digression ends somewhat abrupt, as there is no mention of the outcome of the battle. This may be an instance of "unusual narrative emphasis", and as such a common feature of Hellenistic narrative; cf. Morrison 2007, 7. But since no particular battle is pictured here, as the poet is rather describing or envisaging a perennial phenomenon, the outcome may not be of any relevance as it is subject to change. The focus is on the natural enmity between the two animals and not on which is the stronger. Moreover, in the context of the *Theriaca*, in which snakes are depicted as evil monsters, the fight becomes a symbol of the battle between good and evil; see Spatafora 2005, 243. For the idea of archetypal enemies in the animal world see Ael. *NA* 5.48, who includes the asp and the ichneumon.

**190 Ἰχνεύμων δ' ἄρα μοῦνος:** the particle stresses the fact that only the ichneumon, an Egyptian kind of mongoose (as is explained in lines 195 ff.), is able to escape the attack of the asp without getting harmed; on the ichneumon see Spatafora 2007a, 122.

**ἀκήριος:** a rather lofty adj., restricted to poetry, at least before Plutarch. In hexameter poetry it is always used in this *sedes*. As Williams (1978, 44) remarks, in Homer the adj. has two distinct meanings: (i) in the *Iliad*, 'lifeless', 'spiritless', (ii) in the *Odyssey* and *Hymns*, 'safe', 'unharmed (by the Κῆρες)', e.g. *Od.* 12.98 and 23.328 where the poet tells us no sailors can boast they have escaped Scylla ἀκήριοι, or *h.Merc.* 530, of a magical golden wand, given as a present by Apollo, that will keep the recipient 'safe from harm'. The second meaning, 'without meeting its κῆρ', is cleary intended here, as in e.g. *Call. Ap.* 41, of the dewdrops of Apollo's hair that act like panacea: in the city where they fall all is 'free from harm'; in A.R. 3.466 it is used for Jason, of whom Medea hopes he will escape unharmed from the bulls. In *Ther.* 771, however, a third meaning, 'harmless', is intended by the poet.

**191 ἠμὲν ... ἠδ'**: only here in the poem. A correlative conjunction strongly reminiscent of Homeric syntax, just like many elements in 190–208 are strikingly reminiscent of Homer; see Touwaide (1991, 79–80), who discusses this passage in its Homeric context.

**ὅτ' ἐς μόθον εἶσιν**: the warlike depiction of the enmity between humans and poisonous animals is temporarily transferred to a battle scene in which the ichneumon and the asp stand opposite of each other. The Homeric μόθος ('battle din') in particular reminds us of Nic.'s portrayal of animals partaking in human-like battle. The ichneumon does not just happen to encounter an opponent, but literally 'goes to war'; see Touwaide 1991, 80 and Introduction 8.8.

**λυγρά**: although the asp's eggs (192) themselves are harmless enough, the poet, with the eggs' future harm in mind, brands them as 'baneful'. The separation between adj. and noun enables the poet to ventilate a particularly negative and dread-inspiring term well before the object qualified is even explained, placed, moreover, emphatically at line-end. This technique of instilling dread in the poem by inserting negative terms, even when the situation does not require such a characterisation from a descriptive point of view, is used throughout the *Theriaca*; cf. Introduction 8.2 and 8.8.

**192 κηριτρόφου**: echoing ἀκήριος in 190. The adj. is likely to be a Nic. coinage, although probably inspired by Hesiod's κηριτρεφής (*Op.* 418). Adj.'s built with -τροφος are not very common. Homer has ὀρεσίτροφος (*Il.* 12.299, 17.61, *Od.* 6.130, 9.292) in the same *sedes*, of a mountain-nurtured lion; cf. ὀρείτροφος in S. *Ichn.* 151 (fr. 314.157 *TrGF*) and ὀρίτροφος in Opp. *H.* 1.12. But in Homer the first stem refers to the region on which the animal feeds or in which it was bred, instead of the object bred by the animal itself. Such use, which fits Nic.'s, is found in *h.Ap.* 21 where πορτιτρόφος is used of land nourishing calves. The difference between such objective and subjective use of the adj. is still found in later poetry, cf. ἁλίτροφα, 'nurtured by the sea' (Opp. *H.* 1.76) and ποεσίτροφος, 'bringing forth herbs' ([Opp.] *C.* 3.189). But a double reading might be intentional, as the snake not only brings forth κῆρ, (either by its own venomous attacks or by producing offspring), but also feeds on someone else's κῆρ. If the latter is intended as well, an even more grim picture of the snake's nature is painted: its poisonous assaults are not just a biological mechanism of defence, but the very purpose of the snake's existence is to attack and destroy others, be it animal or human; cf. Introduction 8.1.

**γαίῃ:** perhaps a contrast with 448–457 is intended, where a similar story is inserted, relating a battle between the dragon and the eagle. If such a contrast is intentional γαίῃ could be marking the opposition between the two domains, viz. land and sky. A similar opposition, however, can be found closer to this line: in the first half of the digression the ichneumon and the snake move on land, whereas in 200 the battle is transferred to the river.

**193 διεσκήνιψε:** only here. The sg. σκηνίπτω is not found elsewhere either, although it appears to be related to σκνίψ, an insect that destroys vines (Gal. 12.186 Kühn).

**ὑμένων:** occupying the same *sedes* as ὑμένεσσι in 184, which may point at an intentional contrast between the two: in 184 the membranes cover the dangerous fangs containing the snake's poison, whereas in 193 the membranes refer to the delicate membranes that cover the young snakes in their eggshells. Though the unborn snakes are utterly vulnerable, their delicacy will soon grow to hazardous strength.

**194 δαρδάπτων:** a rare poetic verb, found twice in the *Odyssey* (14.92, 16.315) and twice in Aristophanes. According to *LfgrE* it is likely that it is a cognate form of the more common δάπτω, extended with a reduplication in the present. The verb is aptly used here of shamelessly eating food that is not yours, just like Homer applies the verb to the wooers that are squandering Odysseus' stock. In Ar. *Nu.* 711 it is used of bedbugs biting the sleeper's body, which has the same parasitic connotation. According to Dover (1993, 198), commenting on Ar. *Ra.* 66, "it may be an instance … of a word which is highly poetic at one time and place but colloquial at another". The highly epic context of Nic.'s diction, however, indicates that his use should probably not be taken as colloquial.

**συνερραθάγησεν:** 'crunches'. Neither the compound nor the simple occurs elsewhere. Crugnola (1961, 125) suggests a connection to the Homeric adj. ῥόθιος, 'roaring, dashing', as applied to the loud surf of the sea (*Od.* 5.411–412).

**195 μορφῇ ἰχνευτᾶο κινωπέτου:** the combination is somewhat confusing as ἰχνευτᾶο is to be taken literally, and not as a synonym for ἰχνεύμων (for which cf. Hdt. 2.67, S. fr. 314.305 *TrGF*). The combination should be interpreted as 'snake-hunter' instead of two separate gen.'s governed by μορφῇ. An ἰχνευτής is usually a dog which makes the ichneumon's depiction as a tracker slightly comical, as the animal is quite small. But in a world where nature is depicted as a battleground a small creature's bravery can be rewarded with epic aggrandisement.

Despite the expectation roused by μορφή, 196–199 do not give details about the marten's physical appearance at all, and in the similarity between the weasel and the marten the focus is on their mutual character instead; cf. Schindler 2000, 67.

**οἷον:** comparisons with animals are typical of Homer, although normally it is men who are compared to particular animals, not animals themselves.

**ἀμυδρῆς:** the adj. is carefully placed at line-end to increase the suspense, which is resolved in the next line when the audience gets to know to which creature the poet is referring, i.e. a marten.

**196–197 ἴκτιδος ἥ … | μαίεται:** the relative clause following from the simile is neither directly related to Nic.'s main topic, i.e. snakes, nor to the digression dealing with the asp and the ichneumon, but to the marten. The addition merely seems to serve the introduction of the rare ἴκτις, and as such, the poet's knowledge of the animal's rare name. Cf. 170, where another simile is centered round a rare word; Schindler 2000, 67. The short characterisation that follows in lines 196–199 does not deal with the animal's appearance, as we would expect, but draws on images from daily rural life. We see chicks fostered by their mothers, fowls sleeping on their roosting-perch and domestic birds attacked by a predator, a phenomenon not uncommon; cf. Anyt. *AP* 7.202 (*HE* 704–707 = Geogh. 11), in which some predator (a weasel, a fox?) has mauled a rooster in the night, Aristotle's statement about the marten ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὀρνιθοφάγον ὥσπερ αἱ αἴλουροι (*HA* 612b14–15), and perhaps *Od.* 16.216–219, where the shrill wails of the reunited Odysseus and Telemachus are likened to those of birds whose chicks have been robbed from their nests by country folk. Though the passage is not relevant to the pupil from a didactic point of view, it is a clear example of Nic.'s interest in pictorialism. On Nic.'s detailed depiction of situations from everyday life see Zanker (1987, 99–101) and Introduction 8.2; for similes in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.7.

**ὄλεθρον:** see 675 n.

**197 πετεύρων:** despite the almost complete lack of verbal similarity to Theoc. 13.12–14 (πέτευρον being the only resemblance, used in the same *sedes*), the picture painted by Nic. here is quite close to Theocritus', where we find chicks looking for their rest as their mother flaps her wings while sitting on her roost. If Nic. had this passage in mind we may infer that the opposition between ποτὶ κοῖτον (13.12) and ἐξ ὕπνοιο is intentional: whereas in Theocritus the chicks

are going to sleep peacefully at eventide, here we find the little birds brutally snatched both out of their sleep and from their perch. Once again Theocritus' lovely imagery would be countered by Nic., who brings us real life rather than pastoral romanticism.

**198 λέχος:** this use of λέχος for a bird's sleeping-place is rare. As a word from the realm of human life used in a context of animals, the poet may have borrowed the image from S. *Ant.* 425, which was in turn borrowed from A. *Ag.* 50. In the *Agamemnon* λέχος is used for the nest of young eagles (τρόπον αἰγυπιῶν, οἵτ' ἐκπατίοις | ἄλγεσι παίδων ὕπατοι λεχέων | στροφοδινοῦνται; A. *Ag.* 49–51), whereas in *Antigone* the word is used when the weeping Antigone is likened to a bird, bewailing the empty 'bed' robbed of its young, transferring the image of 'bed' from the human world to the animal context of a nest (ἡ παῖς ὁρᾶται κἀνακωκύει πικρῶς | ὄρνιθος ὀξὺν φθόγγον, ὡς ὅταν κενῆς | εὐνῆς νεοσσῶν ὀρφανὸν βλέψῃ λέχος; S. *Ant.* 423–425). For personification as a literary motif see Introduction 8.1.

**ἐπίκριοι:** 'roosting', an adj. based on ἴκριον ('pole', though usually a mast, not a perch). The compound is not found elsewhere.

**198–199 ἀφαυρά | τέκνα:** the adj. expresses weakness, particularly of the body, as in Homer (*Il.* 7.235) and Hesiod (*Op.* 586), as opposed to the later derived meanings of 'dim' (Arat. 256, 277, 569) or the metaphorical 'of low (social) class' (A.R. 2.453, 4.1489); cf. Rengakos 1994, 63. In a poem that often deals with the weakness of man and the fragility of human life, the focus on the feebleness of the helpless little chicks is poignant.

**199 τιθαιβώσσουσιν:** a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Od.* 13.106) that probably means 'to store honey', although the exact sense and etymology are unknown (Heubeck 1989, 171). The context in the *Odyssey* paints the picturesque cave of the Nymphs on Ithaca. Though recalling this pleasant scene, with more or less domestic traits such as bees filling bowls with honey and nymphs weaving at the loom, may serve to underline the pleasant, domestic atmosphere the hencoop normally breathes, Nic.'s choice for the verb may as well have been determined by its rareness, especially since its meaning is unclear. Nic. may have picked up the word form Antimachus (fr. 108 Matthews = 183 Wyss), who, according to Matthews (1996, 282) has extended the meaning to 'fostering', 'supplying with food', a sense that is in accordance with Lycophron (622) and Nic. here.

**200** **ἀλλ' ὅταν:** without further notice Nic. returns to the ichneumon and the asp. After setting the scene in the Egyptian water-meadows, the fight between the two is described in heroic-epic terms.

**Αἰγύπτοιο:** in Homer used for the Nile (masc. in *Od.* 4.477, πρίν γ' ὅτ' ἂν Αἰγύπτοιο, διιπετέος ποταμοῖο) and by extension for the land itself (fem. in e.g. *Od.* 17.448). Although the name instantly triggers the land, not the river, Nic. may have the rare Homeric instance in mind: Nic. follows the same *sedes* and the same epic gen. (otherwise rare), and ἀλλ' ὅταν echoes Homer's πρίν γ' ὅτ' ἂν. Moreover, in Nic.'s context (θρυόεντας ἰάμνους, 'the rush-grown water-meadows') a reference to the Nile makes good or even better sense, than to Egypt in general.

**θρυόεντας:** see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2

**ἰάμνους:** see 30 n.

**201** **ἀσπίσι:** the shift from sg. to plur. is significant. The battle that is to be described is no longer portrayed as a singular phenomenon, but as a frequent occurrence, with the ichneumons as the perennial enemies of the asps.

**μῶλον:** a Homeric noun primarily used in the *Iliad* for battle, usually μῶλος Ἄρηος. The word is yet another reference to Nic.'s depiction of animal fights as heroic wars fought by humans. Such Homeric words, particularly from the *Iliad*, give epic dimension to what is an ordinary natural phenomenon; see Touwaide 1991, 80 and Introduction 8.8.

**ἀθέσφατον:** an archaic word, in its most common *sedes* (some exceptions are *Il.* 3.4, *Od.* 11.61, [Theoc.] 25.24). The meaning of the adj. is not undisputed, varying from 'beyond even a god's power to express, unutterable', 'not according to a god's utterance, unblest' (both LSJ), to 'sich nicht in den Grenzen des von Gott Bestimmten, Normalen haltend' (*LfgrE*). Different contexts lead to 'unlimited' (West 1978, 322 on Hes. *Op.* 662), 'außergewönlich' (*LfgrE* on Hes. *Op.* 622) and 'über das Normale hinausgehend' (*LfgrE* on Hes. *Th.* 830). The use in Apollonius and Theocritus is divided between 'wondrous' and 'boundless, enormous'. The exact meaning here is not clear either. Gow & Scholfield translate "fearsome" (1953, 41), whereas Jacques has "une mêlée prodigieuse" (2002, 17), which carries several of the different aspects in it. It is hard to decide whether Nic. was thinking of a plainly intensive battle, or of a battle that goes even beyond

the god's power to express (or perhaps describe), in which case the battle is pictured momentous, rather than just rough.

**εἱλικοέσσαις:** for other examples of hexameters being encased by a noun and a corresponding adj. see 15 n. This particular kind of *hyperbaton*, already found in Homer, was considered a refined stylistic device among Alexandrian poets; cf. Introduction 6.8. The order found here, i.e. the noun at the beginning of the line and the adj. at line-end, seems to be much rarer than the reverse, but this may be due to the fragmentary transmission of Hellenistic poetry, statistically limiting the value of such observations; the instances in Aratus cited by McLennan (1977, 97) i.e. 43, 107, 369, 1074, all show this same pattern of adj. before noun. The adj., clearly a synonym of ἕλιξ, is first found here. Its formation in -εις indicates that it is probably a Nicandrean coinage, as the poet's liking for the suffix is evident; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2. A pun on the Homeric εἰλιπόδεσσι may be intended: the latter refers to the dragging gait of oxen, whereas Nic. uses his similar-sounding adj. for the twisted energetic writhings of the snakes in battle; cf. Introduction 6.6.

**202 τύψε:** unaugmented ind. aor. forms occasionally occur in Hellenistic hexameter poetry, although augmented forms can occur within the same text (cf. A.R. 2.20 τύψεν, 2.29 ἔτυψε). Even in a didactic poem like the *Theriaca*, non-heroic by nature, conventional epic diction is carefully imitated. Alternatively one can state that the confluence of the lofty language of epic and the particularly prosaic subject of illness appears to have been one of the poet's objectives. As Hopkinson (1984, 91–92) mentions, Alexandrian Homerists discussed whether in verse the augment should be retained after a vowel. This would explain the lack of the augment in the cases of τύψε (here and in 313). For the frequent use in the *Theriaca* (46, 202, 281, 451, 728, 761, 800, 859) of the empiric aor., used for phenomena that have been observed repeatedly in the past, see K-G § 386.7, Smyth § 1930, Rijksbaron § 8.4, n. 3. It is closely related to the gnomic aor., but as it lacks a gnomic context the term empiric aor. is more apt.

**203 τάρταρον εἰλυόεσσαν:** this use of τάρταρος is only found here, used metaphorically of the muddy bottom of a river. As the word is used as an appellative rather than a designation of the nether world the lower case spelling makes more sense. The only similarity between the two different uses of the word seems to be that the τάρταρος is considered to be at the bottom, or constituting the lowest part. Common epithets of the τάρταρος in earlier poetry (εὐρύς, ἠερόεις, βαθύς) lack resemblance with Nic.'s use, although the idea of the Tartarus

being a place where things lie hidden under the earth shows some analogy, as here the slimy mud lies hidden at the bottom, invisible to the eye. There is little reason to follow Touwaide (1991, 80), who considers the word to be an implicit evocation of Homer. The adj. is used for the first time (and in the same *sedes*) in A.R. 2.823 of a common muddy river (ἰλυόεντος … ποταμοῖο); it is used again in *Ther*. 568.

**ἄφαρ:** a poetic adv. mainly used in epic, both in narrative and speech. It is found mostly at the beginning of a clause, followed by δέ, a practice followed by Nic. here (though not in 610). Here it is used in one of the few narrative passages of the poem.

**205 Σείριος:** Sirius, the dog-star. As West (1978, 262–263) points out "the heliacal rising (19 July for Hesiod) marked the season of most intense heat". He goes on to remark that "the mistaken theory gained currency that some poets used Σείριος to mean the sun", a misconception that is also reflected in the scholia (Σ *Ther*. 205b). It is obvious that Nic. was aware of the difference between the star and the sun. He knows Aratus' *Phaenomena* in which the distinction is clearly made, as in 332 he speaks of the rising of Sirius, 'together with the sun' (ἅμ' ἠελίῳ). Yet it is striking that each time Nic. speaks of Sirius (205, 368, 779) he treats it as if it were the sun itself, emitting scorching heat, instead of just heralding the hottest period of summer. Spatafora (2007a, 123) suggest a connection between the rising of Sirius on 20 July in Egypt and the accompanying high tide and flooding of the Nile, but such a connection does not seem relevant here, despite the combination of Sirius and Egypt.

Nic.'s preference for poetic images seems to be the best explanation for this metonymical choice, as Sirius is not only presented as the bringer of heat, but also topically as the bringer of calamity, cf. *Il*. 22.29–30, where Sirius, referred to as 'Orion's dog' by Homer, is said to be a sign of evil, *ὅν τε κύν' Ὠρίωνος ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσι.* | *λαμπρότατος μὲν ὅ γ' ἐστί, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τέτυκται*; A.R. 3.957–959, *Σείριος Ὠκεανοῖο,* | *ὃς δ' ἤτοι καλὸς μὲν ἀρίζηλός τ' ἐσιδέσθαι* | *ἀντέλλει, μήλοισι δ' ἐν ἄσπετον ἧκεν ὀϊζύν*. This fear of Sirius is probably due to its presumed relation to (the season of) severe fevers; West 1978, 262–263.

Just like the Tartarus was used for the bottom in 203, Sirius is to be read as a metonymy for the sun—with the connotation of imminent doom, heroically heralding the battle between the ichneumon and the asp. The etymological connection between Sirius as a celestial phenomenon and the scorching heat that attends its oncoming is implicitly made in Arat. 331 through the verb *σειριάει*; see O'Hara 1996, 36 and Kidd 1997, 307–308.

**ἀζήνῃ:** cf. Hes. *Op.* 587, Σείριος ἄζει. By using ἀζαίνω Nic. varies on the phrase by choosing, or perhaps coining, a lengthened verb, giving the scorching sun more impact; for such lengthening cf. 229 n.

**τεύξῃ δ' ἄγναπτον ὀδόντι:** the popular belief that the ichneumon's furry skin is impermeable to poison once treated with mud or sand is found in Ael. *NA* 3.22. His addition that in this way only the animal's nose remains unprotected is not found in Nic. Perhaps Aelian used other sources, or was thinking topically of Achilles' heel; for the relation between the *Theriaca* and the paradoxographical tradition see Introduction 8.6.

**206 λιχμήρεος ἑρπηστᾶο:** 'the reptile with the flickering tongue'. Comments on the flickering tongue of the snake—one of its most conspicuous images (cf. [Hes.] *Sc.* 235)—are relatively rare in the *Theriaca*. Apart from this line only 229 and 371 refer to the characteristic dread-inspiring pose of the snake showing its flickering forked tongue. For the spondaic line-end see 20 n. and Introduction 6.11.

**207 σμερδαλέης:** see 144 n.

**ἔβρυξεν ἐπάλμενος:** Nic. seems to be playing with the sound of νύξεν ἐπάλμενος (*Il.* 7.260, 12.404) and τύψεν ἐπάλμενος (*Il.* 13.529). The first one is particularly interesting as it describes Ajax, leaping on Hector and piercing his ἀσπίδα, which in Homer of course refers to his shield, but in Nic. would mean asp as well. For the educated audience the Homeric image becomes mingled with the Nicandrean one: we see two heroes—or two animals—fighting and one leaping on top of the other in anger only to shatter the shield of the opponent—or the snake itself?

**208 βρυόεντος:** 'full of marsh-plants', an epithet that serves to give some poetic colouring to the river, once again showing the poet's inclination for coining adj.'s in -εις; see 34 n. For Nic.'s use of plant-related adj.'s as lexical showpieces see 43 n. and Introduction 6.2.

### *209–257 The Viper*

After the short excursus on the battle between the ichneumon and the asp the poet continues with the next snake on his list: the viper (ἔχις, *Vipera ammodytes*, Leitz § 23). After a general introduction to the respective haunts of the European and Asian variants (209–218), we learn about the particulars of the female (219–221), followed by those of the male (223–229),

the particulars of its bite (231–234), and the physical impact of the assault on the victim (235–257).

**209 εὖ δ' ἄν … ἴδοις:** this combination at line-opening is more or less repeated in 258 (εὖ δ' ἄν … μάθοις) and in 320 (εὖ δ' ἄν … γνοίης); cf. Introduction 6.10. Apparently the poet considered it a useful opening for a new section; for the similar use of εἰ as a structuring device see 57 n. and Introduction 5.2. The use of ἴδοις here follows the poet's vivid descriptions: for the internal or external addressee there is nothing to see outside the poet's words. Yet his choice of words creates a didactic setting that makes the audience follow his instructions as if actually looking at the object pointed at by the teacher, even though his words do not point at anything real. For the use of *enargeia* see Introduction 8.2.

**ἐχιδνήεσσαν:** only here. Though not strictly a *hypallage*, the phrasing ἐχιδνήεσσαν … μορφήν belongs to poetry rather than to prose, as we would expect a gen. of ἔχις/ἔχιδνα instead. Such combinations, where a coined adj. is preferred to a dependent gen. is common in the *Theriaca*, particularly in the last section on herbal recipes (e.g. 66, 503, 838, 840, 860).

**πολυδευκέα:** the only previous instance of this adj. (in the same *sedes*), is *Od.* 19.521, ἥ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει πολυδευκέα φωνήν, if we follow Aelian (*NA* 5.38) and Hesychius, who both give this v.l. for the ms reading πολυηχέα; it is not mentioned in the scholia. As used to describe the singing of a nightingale πολυδεύκης would mean ποικίλως μεμιμημένην. We may well assume that not only the correctness of the adj., but also its meaning was disputed by Alexandrian scholars. It is therefore likely that Nic. chose this unique adj. to show his awareness of the dispute and of its proper meaning (at least according to Nic.), which is, as the context here shows, 'varied', an interpretation which fits both the Homeric and the present verse. According to Σ *Ther.* 209d the adj. means 'bitter', but as the use of the word in 625 shows, this is unlikely to be correct; see 625 n.

**210 παυράδα:** used as a fem. of παῦρος, παυράς is only found here. For a similar formation cf. 131 where θουράς is used as the fem. of θοῦρος; see Introduction 6.2. Nic. does certainly not restrict his coinages to exotic words, as even common adj.'s referring to length are endowed with the poet's peculiar poetic suffixes.

**211 Εὐρώπη τ' Ἀσίη τε:** as Spatafora (2007a, 124) points out, the idea that distinctions in species need to be paired with regional distinctions is based on

an Aristotelean concept. The continental opposition between Europe and Asia has been topical at least since Herodotus.

**ἐπιείκελα:** the lengthened (cf. ἐπιεικής) adj. is typical of Homer and rarely found after Hesiod. In Homer the word is used either in the combination ἐπιείκελος ἀθανάτοισιν (e.g. *Il.* 1.265, 11.60, *Od.* 15.414), or θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' (e.g. *Il.* 9.485, 22.279, *Od.* 24.36), imitated by Hesiod in *Th.* 987 and in 968 (= 1020), ἀθάνατοι γείναντο θεοῖς ἐπιείκελα τέκνα, 'once gods brought forth offspring alike to themselves'. If Nic. is thinking of Homer and Hesiod here, his use shows a clear breach, transferring the adj. from a particularly lofty, to a markedly prosaic context.

**δήεις:** see 100 n. The fut. tense ('you will find') expresses confidence on the part of the teacher, as he is certain that his information is correct. The pupil would get some result if he would check. Yet at the same time it is unlikely that the pupil will ever really be able to compare the two, as he will probably not encounter both, since one breeds in Europe, and the other in Asia. The self-assured pose of the teacher instills confidence in both the internal and external addressee, but at the same time his learning is hard to prove or disprove. For the use of the verb as a structuring device see Introduction 5.10.

**212** **ὀλίζονα:** see 123 n.

**213** **ῥώθωνας:** 'nostrils'. The only instances before Nic. (Hp. *Ep.* 23.17, Megasth. fr. 10.18 *FHG* 2) suggest that it is a medical term, much rarer than the common μυκτήρ (used in 144), which is used both in poetry and prose; for medical vocabulary in the *Theriaca* see De Stefani 2006a.

**κεραοί τε καὶ ἀργίλιπες τελέθουσιν:** perhaps a play on *Od.* 4.85, ἵνα τ' ἄρνες ἄφαρ κεραοὶ τελέθουσι. In Nic. not the lambs are horned, but the snakes. It is probably no coincidence that the Homeric line is preceded by a passage on different regions, or to peoples representing them (Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, the Ethiopians, Sidonians and Erembi, Libya, 4.83–85), whereas Nic., varying on Homer's order, has several regions follow afterwards (214–218), instead of before; but Nic.'s horned snakes are probably no less regional than Homer's horned lambs.

**214–218** The lines 214–218 give no less than eight different regions where the European viper breeds. Though the information given is certainly not necessarily incorrect, the reason for adding such diverse places is an example of the poet indulging in his knowledge of regions near and far, in rare learning, and

in a sense of antiquarianism; see Introduction 8.5. The preference of Alexandrian poets for treating less common places is on a par with their preference for lesser-known myths, or lesser-known variants of common stories, and lesser-known words, although the interest in topography is a general feature of Hellenistic poetry. For particulars on the different mountains see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 174 and Jacques 2002, 104–106.

214 **Σκείρωνος ὄρη:** on the borders of Attica and Megaris; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 174.

**Παμβώνια τ' αἴπη:** the only other reference to the Pambonian mountains is in Nic. fr. 19 G-S (Σ *Ther.* 214), from the third book of Nic.'s *Thebaica*, τείχεά τε προλιπόντες ὑπὲρ Παμβωνίδας ὄχθας | ἐσσύμενοι Μεγαρῆος ἐνευνάσσοντο δόμοισι.

**αἴπη:** practically synonymous to ὄρη, but added here for the sake of variation. The vowel combinations of -ος ὄρη and -ια τ' αἴπη are illustrative of the polished style of the poet. The plur. is not found before Nic.; the sg., not infrequently used by the tragedians, is common in Hellenistic poetry, particularly at line-end, as in A.R. 2.505, Euph. *CA* 75, p. 43, Simyl. *SH* 724.1, *SH* 1175 (adesp.); see Magnelli 2002, 33–34 with n. 116.

215 **Ῥυπαῖον:** a mountain in Aetolia, as is clear from fr. 109 G-S (Σ *Ther.* 215a), where the mountain is called Ῥύπης πάγον; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 174. It is not to be confused with Ῥιπαῖον, which is a mythical snowy mountain in the extreme north, occurring in a few other poems, Ῥιπαίου ... ἀπ' οὔρεος (Call. fr. 186.9 Harder, on the Hyperboreans), Ῥιπαίοις ἐν ὄρεσσιν (A.R. 4.287), Ῥιπαίων ἄχρις Ὑπερβορέων (Antip. Thess. *AP* 9.550.4 = *GPh* 94), and several times in Latin poetry.

**Κόρακός τε πάγον:** a mountain on the east border of Aetolia (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 174), or its north (Spatafora 2007a, 124). In *Od.* 13.408 reference is made to Κόρακος πέτρῃ (different *sedes*), but, as Hoekstra points out, 'raven's rock' is not a very particular designation, and may have been widespread; see Heubeck & Hoekstra 1989, 189–190.

**πολιόν τ' Ἀσέληνον:** according to Σ *Ther.* 215d a mountain in Locris. The adj. probably refers to the mountain's grey appearance, but in addition there seems to be an etymological pun on the mountain's name, 'bright mount Moonless'; for πολιός as 'bright' see 582 n. For etymological play in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.6.

**216 Ἀσίς:** according to Van Groningen (1977, 100), discussing Euphorion's use of the word (*CA* 34.2, p. 37 = 35 Van Groningen = 37 Lightfoot), a contrived variant. Nic. probably uses it here to avoid repetition of Ἀσίη in 212; Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980, 429–430) consider it to be mainly a convenient metrical substitute of Ἀσία.

**ὀργυιόεντα:** probably a Nicandrean coinage, only found here; see Introduction 6.2. An ὄργυια measures a fathom (1,77 metres).

**217 Βουκάρτερον:** unknown, but ostensibly indicative of Asia.

**217–218 καὶ ἐρυμνός | Αἰσαγέης πρηών:** De Martino (1982, 46 ff.) noticed that this enjambic phrase is a reworking of the second half of *h.Ap.* 40, καὶ Κλάρος αἰγλήεσσα καὶ Αἰσαγέης ὄρος αἰπύ, whereas the first half is imitated in *Ther.* 958, Κλάρου νιφόεσσα πολίχνη, on which see n. As De Martino points out, allusions such as these need not show literal verbal echoes, as references are made by use of synonyms. The probability of such a reference is corroborated by the fact the Aesagea only occurs in the Homeric hymn and the *Theriaca*; for such combined intertextual play see Introduction 7.3. The uncontracted form πρηών is rare. It is not found in Homer and the only archaic instance is [Hes.] *Sc.* 437. Other Hellenistic imitators are Hermesianax (*CA* 7.57, p. 99 = 3 Lightfoot, but cf. the ms. reading in Kobiliri 1998, 154) and Lycophron (769, 1069).

**218 Κέρκαφος:** a mountain near Colophon (Σ Lyc. 424 Scheer).

**ἐντὸς ἐέργει:** a formulaic clause (5× in the *Iliad*, 2× in Hesiod), used for regional boundaries in *Il.* 2.617, 845 and 24.544. Nic. uses it in the same way, with ἐντός as an adv.

**221 ἀζαλέαις … φολίδεσσι:** for the *hyperbaton* see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8. The phrasing resembles 31 (ἀζαλέων φολίδων) and 157 (αὐαλέῃσιν ἐπιφρικτὴν φολίδεσσιν), where, in addition to ἀζαλέος/αὐαλέος and φολίς, the stem of φρίσσουσαν was used in the adv. ἐπιφρικτὴν. Even when he repeats his information the poet is keen to avoid formulaic phrasing and finds new constructions, alternating stems (as in ἀζ-/αὐ-) or different word order to achieve original lines. For this significant breach with the Homeric tradition see Introduction 6.10. The echo of ἀζαλέαις … φολίδεσσι from A.R. 4.143–145 is noticed by Magnelli (2006, 189) as well, who adds: "Intertextual snakes are at home in the *Theriaca*".

**ἐπηετανόν:** 'abundantly', a distinctly poetic word, used here in its normal Homeric *sedes* (*Od.* 8.223 is an exception; the word does not occur in the *Iliad*). Nic. seems to be the only poet to use the adj. with a dat. in the sense of 'abundant with'. The adj. is predominantly used of liquids, e.g. milk (*Od.* 4.89), washing tanks (*Od.* 6.86), drinks (*Od.* 7.99, 10.427), means of watering (*Od.* 13.247), or of a more general abundance provided by nature, e.g. garden beds (*Od.* 7.128), the healthy thick fleece of sheep (*Hes.* Op. 517), or thriving herds (A.R. 2.1176). Nic. has used the word in a context that is quite at odds with the idea of natural bounty: instead of qualifying moist and growth the adj. points at the dry and partly dead scales of the snake, turning the archaic connotation into a much less attractive one.

222 **νωθεῖ ... ὁλκῷ:** another *hyperbaton* (cf. 221) with the adj. and its corresponding noun framing the hexameter; see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8. The only spondaic foot in this verse (νωθεῖ) corresponds with its meaning ('sluggish'), which may be an intentional metrical underlining.

**διὰ δρυμά:** a combination reminiscent of the Homeric line-end διὰ δρυμὰ πυκνὰ καὶ ὕλην (*Il.* 11.118, *Od.* 10.150, 197); not found elsewhere. Both in *Od.* 10.150 and 197 διὰ δρυμά describes smoke rising through the thick brushwood. The context of *Il.* 11.118 is a simile in which a lion chases a swift hind darting through the thickets. In the previous verses we are told how the lion has crushed her fawns (ὡς δὲ λέων ἐλάφοιο ταχείης νήπια τέκνα | ῥηιδίως συνέαξε, λαβὼν κρατεροῖσιν ὀδοῦσιν, 113–114) killing them with ease. By recalling this Homeric scene Nic. triggers images of victims that are chased through the thick brush of the forest by a wild animal, a setting that applies to his own descriptions of snakes as well. Even though such a chase is not mentioned here, the reference adds to the poet's preference for adding sensation by recalling frightful images.

224 **μάσσων:** a poetic comp. of μακρός, used again by the poet in 385 and in *SH* 563.10 (fr. 150 G-S) if the latter is genuinely Nicander's work; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 220.

**ἀκιδνότερος:** 'weaker', a Homeric comp. (3× in the *Odyssey*), of which the positive is very rare, Hp. *Praec.* 8.11 and Ath. 3.117a (unless one reads κεδνόν; so Olson 2007, 54), being the only instances of ἀκιδνός before the fifth century CE. Nic. follows the Homeric curiosity here, perhaps with *Od.* 18.130–131 in mind, οὐδὲν ἀκιδνότερον γαῖα τρέφει ἀνθρώποιο, | πάντων ὅσσα τε γαῖαν ἔπι πνείει τε καὶ ἕρπει. Nic. has given the adj. a new context, in which ἀκιδνότερος is used for snakes

instead of humans, varying on Homer, who tells us that nothing of all things 'creeping on the earth' is weaker than man.

225 **μύουρος ... ἀλκαίῃ:** see 122 n.

226 **πεδανή:** 'flat', 'low lying', as derived from πέδον. Some ancient lexicographers saw an etymological connection to ἠπεδανός; see Reece 2009, 45–52.

**πείρασιν:** in archaic poetry the plur. is usually found in combination with γαῖα (e.g. *Od.* 9.284, *h.Ven.* 227, Hes. *Th.* 335, 518, 622), referring to the rather indistinct 'ends of the earth'; only in *Od.* 9.284 the word is used more specifically when Odysseus speaks to Polyphemus of 'the borders of your land'. This geographical use of the plur. in the sense of 'border' is normal in Apollonius (A.R. 1.81, 2.365, 3.680, 4.1175, 1227, 1567, 1597). The only two other instances earlier than Nic. are Parm. fr. 8.26 and 49 DK, where the πείρατα mentioned are used metaphorically. Nic.'s use is quite different, as the word applies to a relatively small (living) object, of which the 'ends' are easily visible. In this way the epic large-scale use of the word is brought down to small proportions, not referring to the high-blown 'ends of the earth', but simply to the extremities of a snake. Yet its use conveys the idea that the snake in question is large, and leaves the reader with the impression of a scary long monster, despite the poet's observation in 224. For the poet's technique of borrowing grandiose epic words and images from early poetry and incorporating them in an everyday setting see Introduction 6.3.

227 **αὐτάρ:** after devoting nearly twenty lines to technicalities such as the length and the general appearance of this snake, the poet cannot resist to proceed with some exciting details, focusing on the fearful appearance of the snake. In little more than two verses three terrifying characteristics are summed up: the frightening stare of its eyes, the flickering forked tongue, and the lashing tale, with αὐτάρ used to draw the attention of the addressee: although the characteristics summed up thus far may be dull, this is a horrendous snake indeed.

**ἐνωπῆς:** although apparently not a noticeable word, this use of ἐνωπή is a unique grammatical innovation of the *dis legomenon* ἐνωπῇ, which only occurs in the dat. in *Il.* 5.374 (= 21.510) at line-end. Although such slight alterations may not seem purposeful by themselves, they do appeal to the attentive reader who is able to detect such play. But if we look at the Homeric line (τίς νύ σε τοιάδ' ἔρεξε, φίλον τέκος, Οὐρανιώνων | μαψιδίως, ὡς εἴ τι κακὸν ῥέζουσαν ἐνωπῇ; 509–510) Nic.'s

reworking is more than a grammatical wink: in the Homeric example someone is rebuked for having done *κακόν* in the eyes of others. In Nic. the *κακόν* lies in the eyes (ἐνωπῆς | γλήνεα) of the snake itself, as becomes clear in the next line: when it is angered its eyes turn blood-red.

228 **γλήνεα:** once in Homer, used for jewels in *Il.* 24.192; the same meaning is found in A.R. 4.428 (γλήνεσιν); see Livrea 1973a, 138. The neut. γλῆνος is related (Chantraine 227) to the fem. γλήνη, 'eyeball', which is what Nic. is referring to here. By using the cognate noun here Nic. shows his awareness of the meaning of both words by playing with the resemblance between snake eyes and precious stones, while at the same time showing off his knowledge of a rare Homeric noun.

**φοινίσσει:** for the frightening red eyes of the animal, here evidently a symptom of the monster's fury, cf. 178. Spatafora (2005, 245) points at the topical element of monsters with fire in their eyes, cf. Hesiod's description of Typhoeus in *Th.* 826–827, ἐκ δέ οἱ ὄσσων | … ὑπ' ὀφρύσι πῦρ ἀμάρυσσεν, and Theoc. 24.18–19, ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν δὲ κακὸν πῦρ | … λάμπεσκε.

**τεθοωμένος:** 'urge', 'excite', a very rare verb, only found twice before Nic. The first instance is *Od.* 9.327, οἱ δ' ὁμαλὸν ποίησαν· ἐγὼ δ' ἐθόωσα παραστάς. There, Odysseus, trapped in Polyphemus' cave, is urging his men on to prepare the staff of olivewood that is to be thrust in the eye of the cyclops. Although other verbal echoes are absent, it is striking that in the Homeric context, the event to which 9.327 leads up culminates literally in a 'blood-red eye', viz. the bleeding eye of Polyphemus. Nic.'s unusual use of φοινίσσει here ('to become blood-red'), said of the eyes of the snake may conceal a reference to the story of the blinding of the cyclops. The second occurrence of the verb is τεθοωμένου in a fragment of Hermesianax (*CA* 7.11, p. 98 = 3 Lightfoot), used in the same *sedes*: ἐν πυρὶ μὲν φωνὴν τεθοωμένου, ἐν πυρὶ δ' ὄμμα | σκληρόν. Here Cerberus' eye is said to be hard with fire: yet another verbal reference to a blazing, or fiery red, eye; for the frightening fiery eye as a topos cf. references in Kobiliri 1998, 53–54. Nic. appears to have combined the two earlier instances, dealing with either a bleeding eye or a fiery gaze, into his own verse.

229 **λιχμάζων:** as an alternative for the regular λιχμάω, λιχμάζω is only found in [Hes.] *Sc.* 235 elsewhere. As usual, Nic. prefers the rarer and—mostly—longer variant (cf. 205 n.); a further extended frequentative variant is used in Mosch. *Eur.* 94 (λιχμάζεσκε δέρην). If the context of [Hes.] *Sc.* 235 is taken into account it is likely that Nic. was well aware of borrowing the verb: in this par-

ticular passage from the *Shield of Heracles* two snakes are described, licking their tongues, whetting their teeth and staring fiercely (δράκοντε | δοιὼ ἀπηωρεῦντ' ἐπικυρτώοντε κάρηνα· | λίχμαζον δ' ἄρα τώ γε, μένει δ' ἐχάρασσον ὀδόντας | ἄγρια δερκομένω, 232–235). Magnelli's remark that "intertextual snakes are at home in the *Theriaca*" (2006, 189) applies to this passage as well; see 221 n.

**νέατον σκωλύπτεται οὐρήν:** cf. νεάτῃ ἐπιτείνεται οὐρῇ (Arat. 49) and νεάτης ἀποτείνεται οὐρῆς (Arat. 184), both at line-end. Both passages in the *Phaenomena* are mentioned in relation to the constellation of the Dragon; in 49 it is the Dragon that reaches one of the Bears 'with the end of its tail', whereas in 187 the Dragon is mentioned as being close to Cepheus and the Bear, the tip of whose tail is close to Cepheus. The combination does not occur in poetry elsewhere except for Opp. *H.* 2.470 and [Opp.] *C.* 3.256. It seems that Nic. is making an intertextual reference to another snake in Greek literature again, albeit in the form of a star sign this time. The verb used here, however, is different than Aratus' -τείνεται: not only has Nic. refrained from copying Aratus here, but he has apparently coined a new verb (only here), 'to wave (by stretching out) to different sides'. According to Chantraine (1025) the coinage is cognate to σκώληξ, 'worm' and, carrying the root σκολ-, 'bent'. Thus the line-end combines imitation and innovation in a single phrase, pointing at previous snakelike contexts, but showing the poet's originality both by coining a new verb, and by applying his imitation to a different setting, applying epic images of catasterism to down-to-earth descriptions of natural phenomena. For the incongruence between νέατον ... οὐρήν cf. 129 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**230 Κωκυτὸν δ' ἐχιαῖον:** an unusual expression, which led the scholiast to believe the line was an interpolation. Cazzaniga (1973, 79–80) offers the suggestion that it was added by a learned reader who wanted to insert a section on a snake known as the *cocytus*. Although the qualification is obviously pejorative, the exact relation between the river of wailing in the Tartarus and this particular snake is unclear. Nic. may just be stating a well-known fact here, viz. that this snake was in fact called the 'snaky Cocytus' by travelers. But such words ('they say', 'it is said' etc.) often function as 'Alexandrian footnotes' (for the term see Hinds 1998, 1–5), used as signposts for intertextual references; cf. 10 n. on ἐνέπουσιν.

The reference here is perhaps pointing at Hermesianax again; see 228 n. In *CA* 7.9, p. 98 (3 Lightfoot) Hermesianax has Κωκυτόν τ' ἀθέμιστον ὑπ' ὀφρύσι μειδήσαντα, "even wicked Cocytus, smiling beneath his brow", modelled (according to Kobiliri 1998, 46) on Hesiod's description of the Styx (*Th.* 361). Presenting a

river as a wicked animal seems just as strange as portraying a wicked animal as a river, but that is just what Hermesianax and Nic. are doing: by reversing Hermesianax' odd description Nic. shows he knows his Alexandrian predecessors. Perhaps we are even to apply Hermesianax' description to Nic.'s, by viewing the snake as 'smiling evilly beneath its brow'. If Nic. is thinking of the passage in Hermesianax here, ὁδῖται may point at Orpheus, who is said by Hermesianax to have encountered Cocytus (pictured as a snake?) in the Tartarus, i.e. when making his journey (cf. ὅδιτης) to the underworld. The comparison between a river and a snake may well be based on their parallel movement, with both the rippling river and the wriggling snake showing twists.

**ἐπικλείουσιν:** once in Homer, although with a different meaning, τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι, | ἥ τις ἀιόντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται (*Od.* 1.350–351). The phrasing was imitated by several Hellenistic poets, but came to mean 'call by a certain (nick)name' (ἐπίκλησις, cf. Arat. 36, 544 and *Ther.* 632), instead of 'praise' as in Homer. According to Hollis (2009, 304), commenting on Call. *Hec.* fr. 117 H. (βουσόον ὅν τε μύωπα βοῶν καλέουσιν ἀμορβοί), "the pattern 'which a particular group of people call such and such' is especially popular in Hellenistic poetry". The other examples mentioned by Hollis are all found in Nic., viz. 103–104, 230, 554, 632–633 and *Al.* 346. *Ther.* 463–464, 627, *Al.* 538–539, and A.R. 1.1068 are similar, but lack a separate subject.

Though not pointed out by Hollis, many examples not only follow the same pattern *qua* message, but also show the same distinct pattern in word order: object-verb-subject, apparently in imitation of Homer; in the *Theriaca* lines 103–104 are the only exception. Other precursors of Nic. who use the variation on Homer in the same way are Call. *Jov.* 51 (τά τε κλείουσιν Πάνακρα), Euph. *CA* 96.3, p. 47 = 100 Van Groningen = 158 Lightfoot (τὸ γὰρ καλέσαντο νομῆες). Arat. 92 (Ἀρκτοφύλαξ, τόν ῥ' ἄνδρες ἐπικλείουσι Βοώτην), A.R. 1.941 (Ἄρκτων μιν καλέουσιν ὄρος περιναιετάοντες), 1221–1222 (ἣν καλέουσιν | Πηγὰς ἀγχίγυοι περιναιέται), 2.506–507 (ὃν καλέουσιν | Ἀγρέα καὶ Νόμιον πολυλήιοι Αἱμονιῆες), 2.1156 (ἐμὲ δ' αὐτὸν ἐπικλείοιτέ κεν Ἄργον), 3.1090 (Αἱμονίην δὴ τήν γε περικτίονες καλέουσιν), 4.175 (ἥν τ' ἀγρῶσται ἀχαιινέην καλέουσιν); references partly from Campbell 1983, 102.

231 **κυνόδοντε δύω:** the use of a dual here is clearly pseudo-Homeric, or at least pseudo-archaic (cf. δράκοντε in Theoc. 24.91, which is not Homeric, but does occur in ps.-Hesiod). This particular form does not occur elsewhere and can therefore not be considered a relic from early epic, like e.g. the dual ὄσσε (431, 758), which occurs frequently in Homer and is borrowed by Nic.

just like other Alexandrian poets (Apollonius in particular) did. Like most Hellenistic hexameter poetry, Nic.'s speech is an amalgam of different dialects in Homeric vein (see Introduction 6.1), but by Nic.'s time even in poetry the productive use of unprecedented dual forms is very rare; see Introduction 6.3.[5]

According to Kidd (1997, 510) "some Hellenistic grammarians thought that the dual could be used as plur. in Homer", which caused later poets to use the dual for a plur. sometimes as an archaism; cf. Monro §173 and West 1978, 200–201. Though this may be the case in Arat. 968, discussed by Kidd, in Nic. we have a clear instance of a proper dual, as the snake only has two poisonous fangs.

Logically the addition of δύω here is superfluous, and Homer does not use the combination of dual with δύω very often; Monro (§173.2) gives *Od.* 8.35 and 43 as the most significant examples, but explains the dual as a kind of attraction to the numeral there. Garvie (1994, 243) adds that these are both special cases where δύω is part of a composite numeral, in which case different rules apply; cf. Meisterhans (1900, 200), who observed similar attraction in Greek inscriptions. Other examples of the dual followed by δύω are mainly found in fixed combinations e.g. Αἴαντε δύω (*Il.* 2.406, 5.519, 6.436, 12.335), υἷε δύω (*Il.* 2.679, 831, 843, 11.102, 329, 12.95). There are, however, examples of objects and animals too, e.g. δοῦρε δύω (*Il.* 2.318, 11.43), λέοντε δύω (*Il.* 5.554, 10.297), and καρχαρόδοντε δύω κύνε (*Il.* 10.360), which may be the combination that inspired Nic. for this line. The use of the lengthened δύω instead of the regular δύο is restricted to poetry, at least until Nic., and may thus be considered a poeticism; instances of δύω in prose consist either of quotations or, very rarely, borrowings from poetic diction (cf. Isoc. 1.4, Ctes. 3c, 688, F 45.50 *FGrH*, and the metrical oracle in Hdt. 1.67). For Nic.'s use of δύω with the dual cf. 609. For the spondaic line-end see 20 n. and Introduction 6.11.

232 **πλέονες δέ τοι αἰὲν ἐχίδνης**: an odd observation. The female viper supposedly leaves a mark of four fangs, whereas the male only leaves a mark of two. The confusion may be due to the idea that the *echidna* is not simply a female *echis* (viper), but another species altogether; cf. Ael. *NA* 10.9.

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5 Nouns in the dual—including productive ones—are frequently used in Attic literature (e.g. S. *El.* 985, *Ant.* 3, Ar. *Ec.* 502, *Nu.* 988, *Ra.* 1192, Pl. *Tht.* 155e, Lys. 1.25, 27; many examples are collected in Cuny 1906, *passim*), but their use started to die out in the course of the fourth century; see Humbert 1954, 17. By the time of the Hellenistic poets, duals were considered stylistic relics, evoking earlier poetry.

233 οὔλῳ γὰρ στομίῳ: either 'with its whole mouth' (cf. Gow & Scholfield 1953, 42; Jacques 2002, 20) or 'with its baneful mouth' (οὖλος: Spatafora 2007a, 59, "con sua bocca esiziale"). Both interpretations make equally good sense. For the homonymy of οὖλος see 671 n.

234 χαλινούς: either 'jaws' or 'poisonous fangs' (as suggested by Σ *Ther.* 234b).

235–257 No less than 22 verses are allotted to the symptoms of the wound caused by the viper's bite. In detail the poet discusses the colour of the discharge, the appearance of the skin, and all kinds of bodily reactions to the snake's poison. Nothing is added, however, about the outcome of the affliction, be it permanent damage or even death. This turns out to be highly characteristic of virtually all descriptions of victims in the *Theriaca*. Nic. simply does not seem to be interested in the victim's fate, only in the symptoms of its illness.

235 λίπει εἴκελος ἰχώρ: in Homer ἰχώρ is used for the undefined substance that flows in the veins of the gods instead of blood, e.g. *Il.* 5.340 and 416. By extension this counts for other non-human, non-animal creatures too, as in A.R. 4.1679 ἰχώρ flows out of the wounded Talos, the bronze giant who guards Crete, ἐκ δέ οἱ ἰχὼρ | τηκομένῳ ἴκελος μολίβῳ ῥέεν. Apollonius, however, adapted the words of the third-century didactic poet Numenius (see Introduction 2.5), who wrote ῥέθεσίν γε μὲν εἴδετ' ἔπ' ἰχὼρ | ἠερόεις, τότε δ' αὖ μολίβῳ ἐναλίγκιον εἶδος (*SH* 591.1–2, from Numenius' Θηριακόν); the adaptation is noticed by Hopkinson (1988, 199). But when Numenius speaks of ἰχώρ he is referring to some kind of discharge, a medical phenomenon from real life, rather than the fantastic substance Homer speaks of: Apollonius has borrowed the phenomenon of 'discharge or pus that looks like lead' from Numenius, but has applied the image to another kind of ἰχώρ, viz. the 'blood of the gods'.

Nic., who knew both Numenius (who was probably one of his sources, see Jacques 2002, xliv–xlv) and Apollonius, seems to have noticed Apollonius' adaptation of Numenius. In turn, Nic. has 'corrected' Apollonius' words in his description of ἰχώρ, though Nic. is of course referring to discharge (like Numenius did) from the wound caused by the snake, and not to the mythical divine blood-like substance. In his adaptation Nic. has changed the Apollonian ἴκελος to εἴκελος, and tells us that the wound's discharge looks like oil.

A different use of the word is found in Archestr. 57.6 O-S (*SH* 188) where it simple means 'juice', dripping from a hare on a spit while being roasted,

whereas in a more technical vein it is said to be 'unconcocted blood' (ἰχὼρ δ' ἐστιν ἄπεπτον αἷμα, Arist. *HA* 487a2–3); Olson & Sens 2000, 211.

**236** **ἄλλοτε ..., τοτέ:** for the non-temporal use of both adv.'s in the *Theriaca* see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**237** **ἀναδέδρομεν:** in 727 the similar verb ἐπέδραμεν expresses the idea of an infliction 'running' over the body. Here, however, it tells us the flesh on the skin rises into a nasty lump.

**238–239** **ἄλλοτε ..., τότ':** cf. 236

**240** **πομφόλυγες:** perhaps 'blisters' (πομφοί), but as πομφόλυγες ('bubbles') are 'the constituent part of ἀφρός' (LSJ I.1) perhaps Nic. is referring to some kind of froth oozing from the wound, which would be a vivid depiction indeed.

**241** **πυρικμήτοιο:** very rare and probably picked up from Call. *Del.* 145, where the adj. applies to cauldrons, wrought with fire in Hephaestus' workplace underneath the Aetna. According to Mineur (1984, 155) the adj. was inspired by the Homeric πολύκμητος in *Il.* 6.48, 10.379 and 11.133, 'worked with much toil', said of bronze, golden and iron treasures. Nic. has found a new use for Callimachus' adj. here, reworking the idea of fire and toil (κάμνω) to 'suffering because of burning' and applying it to a scorched skin, burning because of the wound infected by the poison.

**242** **ἐπίδρομοι:** the adj. is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 6.434), said of a wall open to assault. It was imitated by Callimachus (*Del.* 12), but applied to the island of Delos, αἰθυίῃς καὶ μᾶλλον ἐπίδρομος ἠέπερ ἵπποις ('fitter for gulls than for horses'). According to Mineur (1984, 63): "here (viz. Call. *Del.* 12) it naturally explains itself as 'practicable', as also in other Hellenistic poetry", but that interpretation cannot be maintained for Nic.'s use. In this verse Nic., using the same *sedes* as Homer and Callimachus, has shifted the meaning from potential to actual, as the wound is in fact overrun by sores. Such alterations of Homeric words, given new interpretations, demand high attention from the audience, but for those who noticed the reuse the learned play must have appealed; cf. McLennan 1977, 11–14 for the Hellenistic appreciation of similar phenomena, and Introduction 6.3.

**243 ἰοειδέα λοιγόν:** the adj. means 'poisonous', based on ἰός (poison), not ἴον (a violet). This does not, however, explain how the second part of the compound is to be interpreted, as 'poisonous-looking' makes little sense; cf. similar formations in -ειδής, all referring to appearance (εὐειδής, πολυειδής, θυμοειδής, ὑδροειδής, μηνοειδής, κεροειδής etc.).

The adj. occurs a few times in early epic, of the sea (*Il.* 11.298, *Od.* 11.107, Hes. *Th.* 844) and once of a source (Hes. *Th.* 3). In each verse the colour is compared to that of a violet. In Nic. the reference still applies to the dark colour of the violet, but through his archaic examples the adj. is closely linked to fluids, which makes the echo apt, as λοιγός refers to a liquid substance here as well. In this verse, however, the liquid that is qualified as being violet-coloured is not the sea, but the viper's poison. λοιγός is often used for desctruction caused by illnes (cf. plague in *Il.* 1.67); the combination here, 'purple-coloured ruin', has therefore a double epic ring.

**244 δριμεῖα … ἄτη:** a violent image. ἄτη itself is already a heavy concept, but the addition of the adj. gives the idea of destruction an even more piercing edge as δριμῦς ('piercing', 'pungent', 'bitter') is sometimes used of unpleasant bodily sensations in particular (of biting smoke, Ar. *V.* 146; of darting pain, *Il.* 11.270). The combination is not found elsewhere.

**καταβόσκεται:** cf. Call. *Dian.* 125, κτήνεά φιν λοιμὸς καταβόσκεται, ἔργα δὲ πάχνη. When Diana is angered she sends with her arrows a plague (λοιμός) that eats away the cattle. In Nic. it is the λοιγός (243) that eats away the poisoned body, not of cattle, but of the victim. By adding πᾶν to δεμας the poet presents the image as even more hopeless.

**245 ἀσφάραγον:** a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 22.328–329), meaning 'throat', οὐδ' ἄρ' ἀπ' ἀσφάραγον μελίη τάμε χαλκοβάρεια | ὄφρα τί μιν προτιείποι ἀμειβόμενος ἐπέεσσιν, 'the heavy bronze spear did not cut his throat, in order for him to be able to say something in return'. It is striking that Nic. carefully describes even the most horrendous afflictions in well-chosen words from early epic vocabulary. The information passed on here by Nic. in his role of teacher is blended idiosyncratically with the epic diction in which it is presented.

**246 ἐπασσύτεροι:** for the different uses of the word in Homer and other hexameter poetry see Kidd 1997, 516. Nic. stays close to the general meaning 'one after another', though the context in which the word is used here is unprecedented.

248 **ἀδρανίῃ:** 'weakness', here and in 745. Used by Callimachus (fr. 730 Pf., context unknown), but Nic. may be imitating Apollonius here. A.R. 2.199–200 tell how Phineus can barely move because of his limbs shaking with weakness, τρέμε δ' ἅψεα νισσομένοιο | ἀδρανίῃ γήραι τε. In A.R. 2.197–208 Apollonius gives a description of Phineus' physical plight. Although the verbal similarities are few, we may well assume that Nic. studied passages in earlier poetry in which physical afflictions are described in detail. The description is close to Nic.'s account of limbs oppressed with weakness; cf. 249 n. However, as a noun ἀδρανίῃ and its cognates from the root ἀδραν- (in particular the adj. ἀδρανής) are not very rare.

**βαρύθουσα:** here in its usual metaphorical sense; cf. 135 n.

**μέρμερος:** 'baneful', treated by Nic. as an adj. of two endings, even though Lyc. 949 (μερμέραν βλάβην; no other corresponding fem. nouns found before Nic.) shows that such a treatment is unnecessary; cf. 93, 172, 335 n.

249 **ἐν δὲ κάρῃ σκοτόεν βάρος ἵσταται:** cf. A.R. 2.203–204 κάρος δέ μιν ἀμφεκάλυψεν | πορφύρεος. If Nic. had these lines—which convey a similar message—in mind, the reworking of κάρος into βάρος and κάρῃ is an interesting pun; κάρος is used in *Ther.* 728. The idea of a dark heaviness surrounding the mind is similar in both passages, and the use of πορφύρεος for 'dark' is not uncommon (cf. *Il.* 5.83 πορφύρεος θάνατος, *Il.* 17.551 πορφυρέῃ νεφέλῃ).

**ὁ κάμνων:** for the substantive use of the part. for people suffering from afflictions cf. Hdt. 1.197.

250 **δίψῃ φάρυγα ξηραίνεται αὔῃ:** the symptom of thirst is exploited fully in this line. Not only is δίψῃ qualified by an additional adj., underlining the nasty experience of the affliction, but this adj. is also delayed carefully until line-end, in order to give the sensation extra weight to the reader. In addition the location where the thirst is experienced worst—the throat—is mentioned separately, described by a verb that is itself associated with utter dryness. For such lines in which most words refer to the same negative phenomenon cf. *Od.* 19.517, ὀξεῖαι μελεδῶναι ὀδυρομένην ἐρέθουσιν, 'sharp cares disquiet me as I mourn'. Unpleasant though Nic.'s information may be, the way he conveys it shows his eye for detail and pictorial vividness. For Nic.'s use of *enargeia* see Zanker 1987, 100, and Introduction 8.2.

**αὔῃ:** throughout the *Theriaca* Nic. makes effective use of cognate synonyms; αὐαλέος (24, 113, 157, 328, 361, 506, 938, 953), ἀζαλέος (31, 37, 221, 339, 357), αὖος (250, 628, 881). For this type of variation see Introduction 6.10.

**251 κρύος:** the opposition between thirst as a symptom of poisoning on the one hand (250) with its images of heat and dryness, and cold (251–252) as another manifestation of the viper's bite is exploited well. Just like the inflicted thirst is described in several marked words in the previous line, here the cold is pictured in detail (κρύος, χειμερίη ... χάλαζα).

**252 χειμερίη ... χάλαζα:** see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8 for this sort of *hyperbaton*, which is underlined by alliteration of the χ- here.

**ζαλόωσα:** 'rage', only here. The verb is evidently based on ζάλη ('squall, storm') which is usually applied literally (A. *Ag.* 656, S. *Aj.* 352, Pl. *R.* 496d), but occasionally metaphorically (Pi. *O.* 12.12, 'distress'). To the metaphorical use of χάλαζα ('hail' as a bodily condition) Nic. has added both an adj. (χειμερίη) and a verb (ζαλόωσα) from the realm of meteorology.

**χάλαζα:** according to White (1987, 6–7) χάλαζα is to be interpreted as 'shivering', not as an 'eruption of the skin' as Gow & Scholfield translate (1953, 45) nor as an 'eruption of pimples' (LSJ s.v. χάλαζα II.1.b) around the wound. The adj. χειμερίη seems to point at an interpretation related to the temperature of hail, rather than to its shape: if χάλαζα would refer to the appearance of the wound instead of the cold sensations of the victim, the qualification 'wintry' would be pointless. In addition, the interpretation of 'shivering', or perhaps just 'goose pimples' seems more apt for ἀμφὶ δὲ γυίοις in the previous line, as such a reaction all over the victim's limbs seems more probable than eruptions all over the body. Nic. seems to be describing symptoms here in terms of images and sensations, rather than naming sorts of wounds; cf. 13–14 n.

**254–255 ὁ δὲ νοτέων ... | ... ἱδρώς:** according to Albiani (1995, 9–10) these lines may contain a reworking of Theoc. 2.106–107, πᾶσα μὲν ἐψύχθην χιόνος πλέον, ἐκ δὲ μετώπω | ἱδρώς μευ κοχύδεσκεν ἴσον νοτίαισιν ἐέρσαις (of a woman in love, expressing the physical reaction to her state of mind). A second imitation packed in Nic.'s description is perhaps Sapph. fr. 31.13 Voigt, †έκαδε μ' ἴδρως ψυχρὸς† κακχέεται, as found in one reading of Sappho fr. 31.[6] The relevant

6 The cod. P (ms Parisinus 2036) of [Longin.] 10.2. The ms suggests that ψυχρός existed in one

adj. ψυχρός is given by Lobel & Page (1955, 19), κὰδ δέ μ' ἴδρως ψῦχρὸς ἔχει, but was later dropped in the standard text of Voigt (1971, 58), who chose a different solution to the unmetrical line as transmitted in the mss. Both Theocritus and Sappho offer interesting correspondences to Nic.'s lines. (i) As verbal similarities between Theocritus and Nic. we find the root -ψυχ-, the expression 'colder than snow', and the streaming (κοχύδεσκεν ~ περιχεύεται) down of sweat (ἱδρώς), in addition to the use of the same root in νοτίαισιν (Theoc.) and νοτέων (Nic.). (ii) The combination of ψυχρ- and ἱδρώς is not found elsewhere in poetry, although it is occasionally found in technical prose, e.g. Arist. *Pr.* 870a18, Hp. *Judic.* 26.1, *Morb.* 1.25.15, Theophr. *HP* 9.10.4. In addition, the verb περιχεύεται, although not rare in itself, may be playing on Sappho's κακχέεται (if correct) here. As a poetic technique, reusing the phrasing of earlier poets in a new, less elevated context would certainly suit Nic.'s style. Perhaps Nic. recognised an imitation of Sappho's verses in Theocritus; such an imitation is not unlikely, considering the latter's s imitations of Sappho's Aeolic poems in *Idylls* 28 and 29. Nic. may have found both passages, dealing with the physical reactions to burning love, apt for a striking contrast between the elevated poetic expression of emotions, and a similar physical description, this time, however, of actual bodily suffering from a physical affliction.

255 **ψυχρότερος νιφετοῖο βολῆς:** despite the horrendous nature of the afflictions described here, Nic. is concerned with the poetic qualities of such passages and tries to apply poetic devices where possible. After the parching thirst and dry throat of the victim in 250, 250–251 described a penetrating cold, causing a shivering, just like hail would (χειμερίη … χάλαζα). Here the imagery of wintry cold is employed again when describing sweat, 'colder than falling snow'. The qualification is quite strong, as anything colder than snow was probably hard to imagine for Nic.'s addressees. The combination νιφετοῖο βολῆς is a slight extension of the common adj. νιφόβολος, which, however, always refers to *fallen*, not to *falling* snow. νιφετοῖο βολή ('the falling of the snow') is therefore best to be taken as a poetic *hypallage*, as it is the snow that is cold, not its falling.

**ἱδρώς:** after the long string of words after the article ὁ in the previous verse, the subject comes as a surprise here. We would expect the victim to be mentioned

tradition of Sappho's text, the origin of which is of course hard to date. We cannot, however, exclude that this is the version of Sappho's poem Theocritus and Nic. knew and worked from; for the difficulties in ps.-Longinus' rendering of the poem in P see Russel 1970, 100–102.

as subject here, but the poet has sustained the suspense until line-end. For the *hyperbaton* see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8.

**256–257** As usual Nic. does not give any clear details as to the expected outcome of the poisoning, which in this case is certain death. As Sistakou (2012, 238) points out, the poet instead 'dwells upon iconographical detail to intensify the morbid sensation of his static *tableau*'.

**256 μολίβου:** a rarer synonym of μόλυβδος. μόλιβος is found once in Homer (*Il.* 11.237) in the same *sedes*, but whereas Homer points at the weakness of lead (μόλιβος ὣς ἐτράπετ' αἰχμή), Nic. refers to a different quality of the metal, viz. its dark colour. Both poets, however, use the metal as a means to describe a particular quality of something else. Yet comparison with Numenius (*SH* 591) shows Nic.'s debt and although he has reworked Numenius' lines, the comparison with lead was apparently borrowed from the latter. See 235 n.

**257 ὅτ' ἄνθεσιν εἴσατο χαλκοῦ:** borrowed from Panyassis fr. 33 *PEG* (32 Matthews *Pan.*), although the ascription is uncertain: φολὶς δ' ἀπέλαμπε φαεινή | ἄλλοτε μὲν κυανοῦ, τοτὲ δ' ἄνθεσιν εἴσατο χαλκοῦ. The context is unclear, but φολίς could well indicate a serpent, e.g. the serpent which guarded the golden apples of the Hesperides, or the Hydra of Lerna (Matthews 1974, 142). Panyassis (if he is the author) has in turn adapted Homer's εἴσατο χαλκός (*Il.* 5.538, 17.518, *Od.* 24.524), using the alternative meaning of εἴσατο ('to make like', cf. *Il.* 2.791). The meaning of ἄνθεσιν is discussed by Gow 1951, 98 and Matthews 1974, 142–143.

**χαλκοῦ:** just like the image of lead, the image of copper is found in Numen. *SH* 591.2–3, ἠερόεις, τότε δ' αὖ μολίβῳ ἐναλίγκιον εἶδος | ἀμφί ἑ κυμαίνει χάλκῃ ἶσον. But whereas Numenius is describing the various colours of ἴχωρ (cf. 235 n.), Nic. has applied the metals to the colour of the skin (χροιήν, 256).

With this last remark the description of the symptoms of the viper's bite ends. We would expect to hear something about possible treatment (that is, if there is any), chance of survival, or at least—morbid as it may sound—some remarks on the final result. But to Nic. the subject has apparently been dealt with sufficiently, a common feature of many of his descriptions of symptoms, where we are not told about the outcome.

### *258–281 The* Cerastes

The next snake treated is the *cerastes* (hornviper, *Cerastes cerastes*, Leitz § 18; for alternatives see Spatafora 2007a, 125), a snake that apparently owes its name to the horns it boasts. After a short comparison between the viper and the

*cerastes* (see Introduction 5.7), the peculiar way of moving forward of the latter is discussed and clarified by means of a simile in which the snake's movement is compared to that of a dangling ship, tossed about by adverse winds (268–270). As usual, the proceeding description of the snake's bite is followed by the ensuing symptoms, which in the case of the *cerastes* prove to be particularly gory.

258 **Εὖ δ' ἄν:** see 209 n.

**δολόεντα:** for Nic.'s portrayal of snakes as creatures with evil intent see 8 n. and Introduction 8.1. In its Homeric context the rare adj. belongs to the wily entities Calypso (*Od.* 7.245) and Circe (*Od.* 9.32); a third instance is *Od.* 8.281, where the adj. describes the fine nets spread by Hephaestus above the bed of Aphrodite in order to snare her together with Ares. In A.R. 2.423 Phineus describes Aphrodite as being δολόεσσα, whereas in 3.89 Hera describes Medea in this way. As is clear from these previous instances in poetry, the adj. is not used simply to signify those with inherent evil intent, but mainly highly developed persons, even goddesses, who are capable of good and bad. When they are called δολόεις it is not because they *are* evil, but because they choose to be so when the circumstances call for action. When the adj. is applied to snakes, they are therefore not just portrayed in lofty epic diction, but they are also presented as creatures that choose deliberately to assault humans: their behaviour is not caused by natural or innate responses, but by a conscious choice to inflict pain to their victims.

**ἐπιόντα:** the verb ἔπειμι is often used for approach with hostile intent, i.e. 'attack' (*Il.* 5.238, 13.482, 836, Theoc. 14.67, 24.128, A.R. 3.1294). In Hes. *Op.* 675 (καὶ χειμῶν' ἐπιόντα Νότοιό τε δεινὰς ἀήτας), where the unwanted coming of the winter season is described, the verb has a negative connotation too.

259 **δομὴν ἰνδάλλεται:** see 153 n.

260 **πεποιθώς:** following the Homeric pattern: always at line-end (*Od.* 20.289 is an exception), preceded by the object on which one relies or in which one trusts, in the dat. This can be a skill (*Il.* 2.792, 4.303), one's condition, be it mental (*Il.* 2.588) or physical (*Il.* 5.299, 6.505), or something more concrete (horses and chariots, *Il.* 23.319). In Nic.'s case we find the *cerastes* relying on or trusting in its horns. Gow & Scholfield translate "the Cerastes boasts sometimes four horns, sometimes two" (1953, 45), but the idea of pride, closely connected to boasting, cannot normally be deduced from πείθω. As the horns do not seem to have a

clear use, we are probably to understand that the *cerastes* trusts in its horns because they instill fear with opponents; he can 'count on them' to appear as a fierce adversary.

**261 ἐν:** the preposition seems to govern δοιοῖσι here, which in turn qualifies κεράεσσι in the previous verse. If ἐν is used postpositively here, the separation between preposition and the noun governed is unusually large. It would also mean that Nic. uses πείθω with ἐν, a use not found elsewhere. If Nic. wanted to surprise his audience with a syntactical novelty it is striking that at first he uses a dat. (260), but fools the reader later on by adding an expected retroactive preposition. Alternatively ὅτ' ἐν δοιοῖσι κεράστης could be independent of the previous verb and should be considered as a separate statement with the ellipsis of ἐστίν, which would mean 'sometimes the *cerastes* appears in the variant with two horns.'

**262 χροιῇ:** 'skin', or perhaps 'body'. An anomaly, as χροιή is generally used for 'colour' in the *Theriaca*, as opposed to χρώς, 'skin'; cf. 428 n.

**263 ἁματροχιῇσι:** a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 23.422), meaning 'driving side by side' of two riders. It was picked up by Callimachus, ὡς ἀνέμων οὐδεὶς εἶδεν ἁματροχιάς (54.10 Harder = 383 Pf. = *SH* 254), but according to the scholiast (Pfeiffer 1949, 309, cf. Harder 2012, 408–409) Callimachus mistakenly confused the noun with ἁρματροχίας (*Il.* 23.505), i.e. 'wheeltracks', caused by chariots. What he wanted to express, though, was that 'nobody saw a mark because Berenice's horses ran like the winds'. In Nic. the noun refers to this mistaken use of Callimachus, i.e. not of the movement itself like in Homer, but to the wheeltracks following the course of the road, as is confirmed by κατὰ στίβον. Snakes lurking near roads were already mentioned in *Ther.* 98 and 128. After Nic. the word is only found twice (Man. 4.108, Procop. *De bellis* 2.11.34.2), although it is discussed endlessly by grammarians and lexicographers (Poll. 7.116, Ammon. *Diff.* 32.1, Apollon. *Lex.* 28.1, Ptol. Asc. α.19.1, Porph. *ad Il.* 23.422.4 etc.).

**ἐνδυκές:** see 163 n.

**265 μηρύματι:** only here in the sense of a snake's trail or coil; on the erroneous variant μηρύγματι (printed by Gow & Scholfield) see Spanoudakis 2006, 50. Nic. uses various nouns that are more or less synonyms for the trailing, writhing or coiling body of a snake; cf. σπεῖρα (156), ἀλκαίη (123, 225), ἅλως (166), ὁλκός (266); for *variatio* as a stylistic device see Introduction 6.10.

**266 ἐπαλίνδεται:** according to Magnelli (2006, 195) "probably built on ἐπαλινδοῦμαι at A.R. 4.1463 ἴχνια γὰρ νυχίοισιν ἐπηλινδηϑ' ἀνέμοισιν". In addition he points out that "the morphological variation is all but surprising, cf. ἀλίνδομαι/ἀλινδοῦμαι" (ibid. n. 38), something we have come to expect from Nic. For another Apollonian echo of the same verse see 156 n.

**267 οἶμον ὁδοιπλανέων σκολιήν:** lines 266–268 are discussed by Magnelli (2006, 194–195), who points out that Nic. has created "a remarkable patchwork of Apollonian echoes". After 266, where A.R. 4.1464 was imitated, here A.R. 4.838 ἀλλ' ὥρῃ δολιχήν τε καὶ ἄσπετον οἶμον ὁδεύειν is reworked, by replacing ὁδεύειν with the rare ὁδοιπλανέων (Ar. *Ach.* 69). Latter verb is used intransitively in *Ther.* 915, but here the addition of an object facilitates the Apollonian echo. In addition οἶμον ... σκολιήν is probably based on A.R. 4.1541 ὡς δὲ δράκων σκολιὴν εἰλιγμένος ἔρχεται οἶμον, where the wandering Argo is compared to a writhing snake going along its crooked path. In 268 Nic. compares the movement of the *cerastes* described here to that of a ship; as Magnelli correctly remarks "Nicander reverses the simile: the Apollonian ship was slithering like a snake, while in *Ther.* 266–268 it is the *cerastes* that moves just like a ship"; for such intertextual oppositions see Introduction 7.3.

But there is something more about Nic.'s reversal of the Apollonian simile to be noticed. Comparisons between humans and animals are frequent in early poetry (particularly in Homer), but usually it is humans who are compared to animals, not the other way around, as is the case here, where an element from the animal world is compared to an element of the human cultural world. Although there are some examples of the latter approach (e.g. Hes. *Op.* 533–535), Nic.'s reversal of the pattern is quite original; see also 195 n.

**268 τράμπιδος ὁλκαίης ἀκάτῳ ἴσος:** the combination τράμπιδος ὁλκαίης is a synonym of ὁλκάς (Jacques 2002, 112), a towed ship, hence a trading vessel or merchantman. According to Gow (1951, 113; 1953, 175) Nic. is describing two boats in this verse: (i) a ὁλκάς, which—despite its etymology—does not refer to a boat that is towed here (which would require a third boat), but, as in most instances of the word, to a merchantman, or better, to a boat that is towing another boat; (ii) an ἄκατος (a small boat, though the word is used for ships in general) that is towed by the ὅλκας. The use of ἄκατον in Hermesian. *CA* 7.4, p. 9 (3 Lightfoot) for Charon's small ferry suggests a small and light skiff. In Gow's interpretation the awkward progression of the *cerastes* is compared to the tossing movements of the small boat bouncing behind the ὁλκάς. Jacques (2002, 112), like Schneider (1856) before him, thought that ἄκατος meant 'hull' here, which makes more sense in the comparison, but is, as he admits, not attested,

and therefore harder to defend; see Introduction 8.7. The variant τράμπιος, preferred by Spatafora (2007a, 126), would yield another *hapax legomenon*, a plausible alternative within Nic.'s style.

**ἀκάτῳ:** a poetic word. Prose writers usually have the diminutive ἀκάτιον, though Thucycides has both (cf. 1.29 and 7.25); Kobiliri 1998, 32. Often with the adjective θοός (E. *Hec.* 446, *Or.* 342, [Opp.] *C.* 4.141), but Nic. uses the noun to elucidate a different image.

**269 κακοσταθέοντος ἀήτεω:** the verb is only found here and in 431. This is not the only compound with κακο- used exclusively by Nic., cf. κακόφθορος (795, *Al.* 168), κακηπελέων (878, *Al.* 93). ἀήτεω at line-end is rare and may well be influenced by A.R. 4.1537 (same *sedes*), a verse preceeding the simile between the snake and the ship in 4.1541–1547. As Volkmann (1854, 47) points out ἀήτης is commonly used among Hellenistic poets as an ellipsis of the Homeric ἀήτης ἀνέμων (*Il.* 14.254, cf. Hes. *Op.* 623, 677), perhaps initiated by Antimachus; cf. Pl. *Cra.* 410b4, οἱ γὰρ ποιηταί που τὰ πνεύματα 'ἀήτας' καλοῦσιν.

**271 νύχμα:** often used in the *Theriaca* (298, 446, 730, 916), apparently a variation of δαχμα (on which see 119 n.), βρύχμα (362), and βρύγμα (483); cf. Introduction 6.2.

**272 τυλόεν:** only here; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2

**273 πέμφιξιν ἐειδόμεναι ὑετοῖο:** 'like drops of rain'. An interesting simile, particularly with the stormy waves of the sea in mind, which were part of the simile in 268–269. Thus the image of drops of seawater clinging to the hull of the tossed dinghy returns, very subtly, in the description of blisters that look just like drops of rain clinging to the skin of the victim; see Introduction 8.7.

**274 δάχμα:** see 119 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**ἀμυδρήεσσαι:** see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**ἐς ὠπήν:** the combination is only found elsewhere in A.R. 3.821, where it means "face to face" (Hunter 1989, 185); ὠπή without the preposition is used in A.R. 3.908, of humans 'seeing each other' as well. Nic. uses the word differently, of the look of objects, here of a wound, and in 657 of the appearance of a plant.

**275–276 ἐννέα δ' αὐγάς | ἠελίου:** this metaphorical use of αὐγή as a temporal manifestation of sunlight, i.e. 'day' is not found before Nic. The same extension is found in *Al.* 401, where ἀκτίς is used as a synonym for day. The number of days may of course be a fact known from experience, cf. tertian, quartan and quintan fevers. Nevertheless, the parallel with Call. *Cer.* 82 is striking: ὁ δ' ἐννέα φάεα κεῖται, of Erysichthon who is said to have lain ill for nine days, after having been wounded by a boar. Here we not only find another example of a word for 'light' used for 'day', but also the period of nine days of healing, which—at least in Callimachus' story—seems to be an 'epic round number' (Hopkinson 1984, 144, with references); for the use 'typical numbers' in the bible, folklore and Homeric epic cf. Blom 1936. Blom points at typical periods of nine days in *Il.* 12.25 and 24.107, but perhaps more interesting are conditions that last for periods of nine days to find their termination on the tenth, as in *Il.* 1.53–54, 6.174–175, 24.610–612, 784–785, *Od.* 9.82–83, and 10.28–29; more examples could be given of nine days followed by a tenth *night*; Blom 1936, 255–256. Although Nic. does not mention what happens *after* these nine days of suffering, the outcome on the tenth is obviously relevant, even if it is omitted. Nic.'s remark about the duration of the affliction may therefore be (at least partially) a topos, inspired by Callimachus. The use of φάεα, as in Callimachus, to designate numerical days is not uncommon (cf. E. *Rh.* 447, A. *Pers.* 261), which is why Nic. chooses for a similar but at the same time new expression to show his originality.

**276 ἐπιόσσεται:** reminiscent of a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 17.381, τὼ δ' ἐπιοσσομένω θάνατον καὶ φύζαν ἑταίρων, said of Thrasymedes and Antilochus, 'watching out for the death and the fight of their comrades'. But whereas in Homer the verb is used to express intentional watching, with an eye to taking action, in Nic. the verb is taken literally, of a victim seeing nine days pass, without being able to do anything but wait and suffer. Compared with the active pose of the Greek warriors, Nic.'s subject's plight is even more tragic, as the victim must helplessly undergo what has happened, and must wait and see if healing will eventually come. Spatafora (2005, 258) points at the relevance of the sun as a symbol of life in the context of this line, which may not be relevant per se, but can be considered a poignant reversal of Homer's θάνατον in *Il.* 17.381.

277 **κακοεργόν:** see 8 n.

**κυνόδοντα:** the sg. is somewhat surprising, as it is more likely that the snake will strike with both fangs at the same time; cf. the dual in 231. A distributive use of

the singular is impossible here, so we must assume a collective use (cf. Smyth § 996), even though two fangs make a rather small collective to be represented by a singular. Nevertheless, the poetic impact of the singular is apt here, as the danger of the snake is concentrated in a single point. Despite its literal meaning ('dog-tooth') the noun is used for all kinds of fangs, e.g. of lions (Arist. *HA*.579b12), horses (x. *Eq*. 6.8), and men (Epich. fr. 21 *CGF*).

278 **ἰγνύσιν:** though correct and found elsewhere a few times (e.g. Theoc. 26.17, Herod. 1.14, *APl* 253.4) this unusual form is probably the result of earlier junctural metanalysis of περὶ γνύσι (γνύς being the zero grade of γόνυ) which led to περ' ἰγνύσι, thus yielding a new noun. Cf. Reece (2009) 237–247.

**ἀσκελές:** 'incessantly'. As a Homeric adv. (and in the same *sedes*) it occurs in *Od*. 1.68 and 4.543; cf. 42, where the same adv. is used with a very different meaning; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 126.

281 **ἔκφυγον:** apparently an empiric aor.; see 202 n. By using an unaugmented ind. Nic. seems to be imitating early Homeric diction in which the augment was not compulsory, as apart from lyric poetry, the omission of the augment in post-Homeric poetry is relatively rare, especially when a particular form is not attested in Homer; cf. Call. *Jov*. 11: "ἔσκεν receives no augment, in accordance with Homeric practice" (McLennan 1977, 40). Other instances are e.g. Call. *Jov*. 9, 20 and A.R. 4.1503. This is, however, not the only example in Alexandrian poetry of the coinage of an unaugmented aor., e.g. Call. *Jov*. 73, ἐξέλεο. See Introduction 6.3.

### *282–319 The* Haemorrhoos

After the extensive description of the bite of the *cerastes* Nic. proceeds with the *haemorrhoos* (Avicennaviper, *Cerastes vipera*, Leitz § 19; cf., however, Spatafora (2007a, 126) for other options, such as the *Echis carinatus*), which is described in lines 282–319. The passage on the *haemorrhoos* consists of two separate parts: (i) in 282–309 we find a description of the appearance of the snake, its way of moving, and the consequences of its bite, (ii) in 310–319 Nic. tells us an aetiological myth about a famous instance of an assaulting *haemorrhoos*. The discussion of this particular snake proves to be an occasion for a digression, which serves as a welcome break to the reader as it provides some diversion of the somewhat tedious enumeration the poet has been giving us so far. A similar element is found in Arat. 100–136 and 636–646 where the aetiological story of Dike gives the audience a break from Aratus' technical descriptions; see

Introduction 5.8. The description of the *haemorrhoos*, including the connected aetiology, reoccurs in Ael. *NA* 15.13, which is evidently taken directly from the *Theriaca*.

282 **Σῆμα δέ τοι:** used twice by Aratus (302, 909), next to Σῆμα δέ οἱ in 515, at line-opening; as examples *Il.* 23.326, *Od.* 11.126 and 23.273 may have served. Just as Aratus uses the combination to introduce the constellation that is going to be the subject of a new passage, Nic. uses these words to introduce a new chapter of his subject, by starting with its σῆμα, i.e. the appearance of the next snake described.

**δάκεος:** see 115 n. As the noun δάκος is used both for 'bite' and for 'biting animal' the addressee may be under the impression that Nic. is going to describe the mark of the bloody wound caused by the bite, but the next verse makes clear that a snake is being described here.

**αἱμορρόου:** a noun, used in apposition to δάκεος here. But the fact that αἱμορρόος is not to be taken as an adj. is not evident until 305, where the female αἱμορροΐς stands as a noun. From Nic.'s description follows that the snake's name is based on its bite that 'makes your blood flow', as followed by Lucan (9.806–814). Hunter (1989, 10 n. 45) suggests that its name could also be due to the origin of serpents from the dripping blood of the Gorgo's head (cf. 10 n.).

**ἐνίψω:** unless ἐνίσπω (preferred by Jacques) is the correct reading, Nic. uses a poetic fut. here, found at line-end in *Od.* 2.137, and reused, in the same *sedes*, by two earlier Hellenistic poets: Theoc. 27.11, 39 and A.R. 1.1257, 3.475, 780 and 4.810. Although it is morphologically a fut. of ἐνίπτω, it is usually considered as the fut. of ἐνέπω, a use already found in Homer (*Il.* 7.447, *Od.* 2.137, 11.148); Livrea 1973a, 241. In a didactic poem consisting of a lenghty monologue by the teacher-poet, the verb is aptly chosen and it is not surprising that it was picked up by Nic. for his own use.

283 **κατ' ἀμβαθμοὺς πετρώδεας:** "in rocky ascents" (Gow & Scholfield), "dans les degrés rocheux" (Jacques). Both accept the conjecture proposed by Schneider. According to Touwaide (1998, 171) the alternative reading εἰλυθμούς (Σ *Ther.* 283b) is to be preferred ("dans ses nids pierreux"). Although Touwaide's reading makes good sense, the repetition of εἰλυθμόν in 285 makes it unlikely to be correct, as it would show Nic. to use the same rare word twice within three lines, an argument ignored by Touwaide. The syncope of ἀναβαθμός, although otherwise unattested, is far from disturbing within Nic.'s innovative diction.

**ἐνδυκὲς αὔει:** also at line-end in 263. Such repetition of combinations, particularly in the same *sedes*, is rare in Nic., who generally has a keen eye for variation, even within his sometimes rather technical descriptions.

284 **τρηχύν:** for the incongruence of τρηχύν ... θαλάμην cf. 129 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**ὑπάρπεζον θαλάμην ... τεύχων:** the *haemorrhoos*' lair, which it makes under a hedge (ἄρπεζα), and the places where it likes to sleep, as mentioned in the previous line, do not need to be distinguished: the snake prefers to make its lair under hedges, as found on rocky descents. The exact meaning of the noun ἄρπεζα, however, is not clear, and Σ *Ther.* 284ab give various explanations of ὑπάρπεζον, which only occurs here: according to the Aetolians a flat and smooth site (ὕπτιον καὶ λεῖον), according to others a wall of dry stones, a rock, a rough place, or the (colonnaded) wall of a house, made of pebbles.

**ὀλιγήρεα:** not found elsewhere. Although Nic.'s adj. may just be used for metrical reasons here, it is interesting that the snake's lair is called small by using an extended adj., which adds to its poetic character. The same suffix is found in 183 (δολιχήρεες), where δολιχήρης is used instead of δολιχός.

285 **ἔχεσκεν:** the frequentative/iterative use of ἔχω is mainly used in poetry (Hdt. 6.12 and 7.119 are exceptions). If the iterative implies repetition, perhaps we are to understand that the snake makes a new lair each time it has had its fill, which seems to be corroborated by τεύχων in the previous verse.

**ἐπεί τ' ἐκορέσσατο φορβῆς:** this is the second hemistich of *Il.* 11.562, which is part of a Homeric simile in which an ass is beaten by boys after it has had its fill of fodder, apparently against their will. The comparison between the snake and the ass is interesting: both animals feed on something they have taken themselves, even if it is not given to them. But whereas the ass is cudgelled for its behaviour, the snake returns to its lair unharmed. We can even see a foreshadowing of *Ther.* 349–358, where we discern the same pattern: both the ass and the snake get what they want, but the ass has its price to pay, whereas the snake does not. The hierarchy is clear from both examples: the snake is a powerful creature, which does not need to yield, a message which accords with the picture Nic. has been painting so far.

288 **ἄλλοτε μέν … ὁτὲ δ'**: for Nic.'s use of ἄλλοτε see 37. Here Nic. is probably discussing varying species, not single snakes that vary their colours from time to time.

**ψολόεις … αἰθός**: some species are 'sooty', others 'reddish brown', inverted in Aelian's account (*NA* 15.14), who interprets these colours as φλογώδης and δεινῶς μέλας.

289 **ἐσφήκωται**: the verb is used of things that look like a wasp's waist, i.e. small compared to the rest of the body. It is found once in Homer (*Il.* 17.52) of hair bound tightly with gold and silver, by which either clasped hair (Kidd 1997, 339) or braids are meant. Nic. may have borrowed the verb from Arat. 441 (same *sedes*), where it refers to a constellation that looks like a man who holds tightly in his hands (ἐσφήκωται … διὰ χειρός) another constellation, viz. Θηρίον, a word often used by Nic. to describe snakes. Here we have another use of the same verb, describing the appearance of the *haemorrhoos*, which is apparently very slim around the neck. Nic. has reused an earlier description of a θηρίον that looks like a wasp in some way to give his own wasp-like description to *his* own θηρίον.

**πεδανή**: see 226 n.

291 **νιφόεντα**: normally the adj., which is all but limited to poetry, is used for snowy mountains, to the extent of being an *epitheton*, of the Olympus and the Parnassus in particular. Exceptions of this use are few: once of heaven in Alc. fr. 355.1 Voigt, νιφόεντος ὠράνου, and once of Helen in Ion fr. 46 *TrGF*, νιφόεσσ' Ἑλένη. Nic.'s use, here and in 881, clearly means 'snow-white', an interpretation only used by Ion before Nic. Elsewhere in the *Theriaca*, however, the adj. is applied in its normal sense (145, 440, 502, 958). The use of this adj. here is typical of Nic., who often takes lofty words out of their epic context in order to use them for descriptions of ordinary things.

**κεράατα δοιά**: the artificial epicism is possibly borrowed from Arat. 174 κεράατος. As Kidd (1997, 247) points out, it is probably an expansion of κέρατος. If Aratus coined the word he may have based himself on the analogy with καρήατος (*Il.* 23.44), which is an expansion of κάρητος (*Od.* 6.230). The use of δοιά for δύω is common in (epic) poetry.

292 **φάη:** apart from the light of the eyes (Pi. *N.* 10.40) or their gaze (Posidipp. 3.2, 7.6 AB) the noun is occasionally used of the eyes themselves, *Od.* 16.15, 19.417, Call. *Dian.* 53, 71, 21; used again in *Ther.* 720.

293 **σμερδαλέον:** see 144 n. The description of this threatening pose of the *haemorrhoos* is quite similar to that of the viper in 167, λευγαλέον δ' ἀνὰ μέσσα κάρη πεφρικὸς ἀείρει. In both verses we are presented with the terrible (λευγαλέον/σμερδαλέον) head (κάρη/κάρηνον) of the beast, shuddering (πέφρικε/πεφρικός) above (ἐπί οἱ/ἀνά) the rest of the body on the ground. Perhaps Nic. is describing the pose of the *haemorrhoos* as he has seen it, but the similarity can also indicate that he uses the standard pose of the threatening snake with its head up high as a stock description. In reality, this particular snake is about one foot in length (286, μήκει μὲν ποδὸς ἴχνει ἰσάζεται), so the terrible head can hardly be rising more than 10–15 cm above the ground!

295 **πλόον αἰὲν ὀκέλλει:** this is the second instance of a comparison between a snake's movement and that of a ship. After the crooked movement of the *cerastes* had been compared to that of a small towed boat in 268–269, the poet informs us here that the *haemorrhoos* 'sails a course' (for ὀκέλλω cf. E. *IT* 1379).

**πλόον:** πλόος came to mean ὁδός in later Greek; Reinsch-Werner (1976, 289), who translates "Wegstrecke", and Hollis (2009, 255) "a path on land", commenting on Call. *Hec.* 74.26, τιν' ἔχοντα παρὰ πλόον οἰκίον, "someone who has a house beside a road". But as Matthews (1996, 224–228) points out, Nic. does not use πλόος in this sense, as the noun indicates 'course' or 'journey' here. This use seems to be due to Antim. fr. 77 Matthews (106 Wyss = *SH* 76), on which see Matthews. For Nic.'s debt to Antimachus as a source of unusual language see Introduction 6.5.

297 **παῦρον ὑποψοφέων:** 'making a slight rustling sound from under its body', viz. when crawling. The use of παῦρον as an adv. is rare. In Pi. *P.* 9.24 and Lyc. 1429 it is used adverbially of time, 'briefly'; the only other instance before Nic. seems to be in a fragment of Eratosthenes (*CA* 19, p. 64), but the lack of context makes interpretation difficult. Alternatively, παῦρον could be qualifying χύσιν, but it is hard to see why the poet would refer to a 'small' heap of straw.

**καλάμης χύσιν οἷα διέρπει:** the apt image pertaining to the sound of an unknown animal rustling through grass, reeds, or thickets captures a familiar feeling of uneasiness for the external addressee.

**298** **νύχματι:** cf. 271 and Introduction 6.2. As usual the description of the appearance of the snake is followed by a detailed description of the characteristics of the wound caused by the snake's bite.

**ἄχροον:** not 'colourless', but 'not according to the colour of a healthy skin', i.e. 'pallid', cf. Arist. *HA* 584a14. The adj. κυάνεον in the next verse makes clear that the swelling is dark, whether black or blue.

**οἶδος:** found either at the beginning (188) or at line-end in the *Theriaca* (298, 426, 743), which may be emphatic. Nic.'s preference for explicit medical details of the wounds at issue surfaces regularly in his snake descriptions, sometimes underlined by emphatic positions within the verse. Although the poet's predilection for detailed information on wounds could be explained from a physician's viewpoint and thus be taken as a sign of detailed medical knowledge (see Introduction 2.3), from a poetic point of view these descriptions show Nic.'s interest in excessive sensationalism; see Introduction 7.3. This fondness of horror may not be considered a poetic criterium per se, but other authors such as Lucan and Ovid have shown that a proclivity for detailed and colourful descriptions of suffering can be part of an author's poetics; cf. Toohey 1996, 62 and 65–66.

**299** **κραδίην:** even in medical observations, such as the description of cardiac arrhythmia here, caused by envenomation (cf. Touwaide 1997, 207 n. 73), Nic. adheres to the epic style, using the Ionic-epic κραδίη. Although κραδία is sometimes used for mind as well (in Homer, but also in *Ther.* 757), it is clear from e.g. *Il.* 13.442 that κραδία is clearly a physical corporal element too; cf. 757 n.

**300** **νυκτὶ δὲ πρώτῃ:** we would expect this designation to be the first of a series, followed by the symptoms on the second and subsequent nights. Nic., however, seems to have forgotten about this enumeration. Jacques' translation "Dès la première nuit" is not warranted by the normal use of the dat. of time (cf. K-G § 426.2) and Gow & Scholfield's translation ("on the first night after") implies a series of following nights. It makes sense to interpret the phrase as 'in the beginning of the night', but this, in turn, does not explain why these symptoms would occur at this time of day in particular, rather than after a fixed number of hours, indepedent of the time of day.

**διέσσυτο:** for the use of the aor. here and in 303 (παρέδραμεν) see 202 n.

**301 αἷμα ... δι' ὤτων:** there is a clear climax in the order as presented by the poet. Giving up blood through one's mouth is worse than a nosebleed. The affliction of blood welling from one's ears, however, is rare and saved until the end, to produce a gradual increase in horror; see Introduction 6.8. The three elements are neatly divided by the feminine caesura and the bucolic diaeresis.

**302 πιδύεται:** the enjambment effectively increases the horror of the previous line. Not only do bleedings occur from nose, throat and ears, but the blood is said to 'gush forth', indicating a steady flow, not just a dripping trickle. The shift from the use of empirical aor.'s (see 202 n.) to present forms (διέσσυτο, πιδύεται, παρέδραμεν, ῥήγνυνται) is hard to interpret, unless we are to understand two instances of a historic present, or are dealing with another instance of *variatio* (see Introduction 6.10).

**304 ὠτειλαὶ ῥήνυνται:** perhaps borrowed from medical prose, considering the similarities with Hp. *Art.* 9.23 and 11.26; see De Stefani 2006a, 57.

**305 μήποτε:** this line is similar to 186 and 474–475, where the didactic teacher briefly gives a personal warning against a possible encounter with a particular snake. Such comments are rare in the *Theriaca*. Here a transition is made from the male to the female of the *haemorrhoos*, whose bite causes different symptoms.

**θῆλει' αἱμορροῒς:** the adj. is not necessary here, as the female of the *haemorrhoos* gets a different ending in -ις. The addition may be a warning to beware of the female in particular, as she is the most dangerous.

**ἰὸν ἐνείῃ:** borrowed from A.R. 4.1508, where the Argonaut Mopsus is bitten by a poisonous snake. This is another example of Nic. implementing 'intertextual snakes', Magnelli 2006, 189; see 221 n. and Introduction 7.3. According to Livrea (1973a, 422) the combination varies on similar phrases like ἰὸν ἕηκε (*Il.* 1.48), ἰὸν ἀποπροιείς (*Od.* 22.82) and ἰὸν ἐφῆκεν (*h.Ap.* 357), but in those cases the noun ἰόν refers, of course, to arrows instead of poison.

**307 κατείβεται:** a poetic variant for καταλείβω, already found in Homer. The verb is usually applied to water (*Il.* 15.37, 21.261, *Od.* 5.185, Theoc. 7.37) or tears (*Il.* 24.794, *Od.* 21.86, Ar. *Lys.* 127), but it is used metaphorically as well, of life (*Od.* 5.152) or love (Alcm. 59a.2 *PMGF*, A.R. 3.290; see Campbell 1994, 263). Nic. appears to be the first to use the lofty verb for blood, another fluid,

but this time in the gross context of a gory wound; Aristophanes' use of the verb in *Lys.* 127 is a case of *paratragoedia*.

**ἀσταγές:** after πιδύεται (302) and κατείβεται (307) this is the third mention of the fact that the blood does not just come out in drops (ἀσταγές being the privative of στάζω), but actually flows from the wound. Yet Nic.'s focus on such loathsome details is always wrapped up in classy poetic vocabulary.

**308 μυδόεντες:** a Nicandrean adj. (see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2), varying on the slightly more conventional μυδαλέος (used in 723), used again in 362. Spatafora (2007a, 128) may be right in signalling a variant on Homer's αἵματι μυδαλέας (*Il.* 11.54).

**309–319** The account of the *haemorrhoos* is concluded with an aetiological myth which explains the halting movement of the snake. The myth told here is not a familiar one and was perhaps invented by the poet himself. Helen, returning from Troy, is forced to land in Egypt, due to adverse winds. Her helmsman is bitten by a snake, whereupon Helen breaks the back of the snake in anger. As a result the *haemorrhoos* now moves awkwardly, because its back is forever broken, a quality apparently inherited by the snake's offspring; cf. Introduction 5.8 and 8.3.

It is striking that the focus in the myth is on Helen rather than Menelaus. Whereas it is well-attested that on his return home with Helen Menelaus was forced to land in Egypt and to wait there twenty days with five ships (*Od.* 3.299–300, 4.83), the presence of Helen is more complicated. Several sources give an alternative story, in which Helen never reached Troy, but stayed in Egypt during the Trojan war, while an *eidolon* of her was seen in Troy all the time (Stesich. 192 *PMGF* from the *Palinode*, E. *Hel.*, *El.* 1280–1283). In this version a journey in which Helen sailed *from* Troy is impossible, since she never went there in the first place. In the *Odyssey* and in the *Nostoi*, however, Helen really was at Troy, and this is the version evidently used by Nic. The fact that Helen is mentioned here, and not Menelaus, may show that Nic. wanted to make clear which version he considered correct, or at least preferred. In addition, the pun Αἰνελένῃ in 310 makes clear that Nic. considered Helen to be the cause of the Trojan War, which underlines the version he deemed correct.

**309 εἰ ἔτυμον:** these two words serve to introduce a myth, creating a short break from the poet's main account; for this function of myths in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.3. As Kidd (1997, 184) points out with regard to similar 'side stories' in Aratus: "they [i.e. myths] are also suggestive of the mythical

element in Hesiodic poetry, and are thus not digressions, but essential features of the genre". As Nic. attempts to create poetry that is on many levels in the same vein as Hesiod's and Aratus', the argument applies to such stories in the *Theriaca* as well, which makes the term digression sound awkward, at least when considered within the genre of didactic poetry. To both the reader and to the internal addressee these stories may be welcome narrative variations to the main drift of Nicander's account, but as they provide information relevant to the teacher's lessons, they are not te be considered excursus from the main contents of the didactic account.

The combination is close to εἰ ἐτεόν in 10, while at the same time pointing to Aratus' use of εἰ ἐτεόν in *Phaen.* 30, where the phrase serves to introduce a mythical age as well. Moreover, in Stesichorus' *Palinode*, the very poem that deals with Helen in Egypt, we find εἰ ἐτεόν γε as well.

The story may be relevant enough for Nic.'s lessons for inclusion in the *Theriaca*, but just like εἰ ἐτεόν περ in 10 is used to create a distance between the poet's factual knowledge and stories that are less verifiable, the poet's own reservation is stated in advance; cf. 10 n. But the use of εἰ ἔτυμον may serve another purpose here, calling to mind the curious variants of the story as told by Stesichorus and Herodotus. The latter tells us (2.112) that Helen did not arrive in Egypt on her way back *from* Troy, but on her way *to* Troy, following Paris. Stesichorus tells us in his *Palinode* that Helen never arrived in Troy in the first place, but resided in Egypt during the entire duration of the Trojan war, her presumed presence in Troy being a mere image (frr. 192–193 *PMGF*). Nic. thus not only shows his hesitance about the veracity of the contents of the story he is going to tell, but also about the veracity of the story itself.

**Τροίηθεν:** varying on Ἰλιόθεν in *Od.* 9.39, where Odysseus starts to tell the Phaeaceans the adventures he underwent after leaving Troy, just like Nicander uses the variation here at the start of a narrative. Hellenistic poets in general have a liking for marginal, lesser-known stories (Hutchinson 1988, 4), although these are often connected to better-known ones, e.g. Parthenius' account of Odysseus' brief romance with Polymela, one the daughters of Aeolus (Parth. 2.2, based on the *Hermes* of Philitas), his seduction of Euippe (Parth. 3.1), Callimachus' account of the sojourns of Theseus with Hecale (Call. *Hec. passim*) and of Heracles with Molorcus (frr. 54b–i, 55–56, 58, 60c, 60g, 60i Harder = *SH* 257–268) etc. Nic.'s start with Τροίηθεν, 'on returning from Troy', immediately prepares the audience for a story that is somehow connected with the *nostoi* and therefore with the side-stories in general that surrounded the two major Homeric epics. Many of these Troy-related stories were of course known from the *Epic Cycle*, but still new angles were introduced by some of the Hellenistic poets, cf.

Cassandra's account of the Trojan defeat in Lycophron's *Alexandra*, the elaboration on Odysseus' stay with Aeolus in Philitas' *Hermes* (cf. the Polymela story in Parth. 2), or Theocritus' account of the wedding night of Menelaus and Helen in the eighteenth idyll (though lacking a proper story). Thus, the opening Τροίηθεν effectively establishes a connection with both recent and archaic epic.

At the same time the opening word polemises the contents of the story that follows, as earlier sources tell of Helen's unexpected journey to Egypt when she was on her way *to* Troy, accompanied by Paris. As such Τροίηθεν plays with the Homeric Τροίηνδε, used five times in the *Odyssey*.

**310** **Αἰνελένη:** the pejorative conflation of αἰνός and Ἑλένη is not unique, as it is also found in a fragment of the *Epyllion of Diomedes* (*CA* Epica Adespota 2.11, p. 73), but since the fragment cannot be dated it is impossible to tell which one is the earlier. Similar instances elsewhere seem to point at a tradition in which epic names were corrupted by means of negative prefixes; for the use of αἰνο- as a defamatory prefix cf. αἰνόλεκτρος (A. *Ag.* 713, Lyc. 820, 1354), αἰνόγαμος (E. *Hel.* 1120), αἰνογένειος (Call. *Del.* 92) etc. Next to Αἰνελένη we find Αἰνόπαρις (Alcm. 77 *PMGF*, E. *Hec.* 945), Δύσπαρις (*Il.* 3.39, 13.769, Alcm. 77 *PMGF*), Κακοΐλιον (*Od.* 19.260, 597, 23.19) and Ἶρος Ἄιρος (*Od.* 18.73). For Helen in particular Aeschylus coined the pejorative variants ἑλέναυς (following Blomfield's suggestion for the ms reading ἑλένας), ἕλανδρος and ἑλέπτολις (*Ag.* 688), pointing at the ἑλ-root ('destroy') in her name; cf. Gorg. *Hel.* 2, where Gorgias states that Helen's name has become a symbol of 'misfortune', Ἑλένην, γυναῖκα περὶ ἧς ὁμόφωνος καὶ ὁμόψυχος γέγονεν … ἥ τε τοῦ ὀνόματος φήμη, ὃ τῶν συμφορῶν μνήμη γέγονεν, probably pointing at the same etymology. See also O'Hara 1996, 13 and Introduction 6.6. For negative attitudes towards Helen elsewhere cf. E. *Cycl.* 280–281 (ἁρπαγὰς | Ἑλένης), *Or.* 19–20, 130–131, 248–250, 520–522, 647–650 etc., and *Hel.* 51–55, 66–67, 80–82, 109–110 etc.

According to Russo etc. (1992, 90), commenting on *Od.* 19.260 (Κακοΐλιον) "verbal play of this sort … is serious and not humorous in Greek". Although this claim may be true for Homer, it is hard to decide whether the same goes for later poets, such as Nic. Helen's negative characterisation here does not follow from the context in the *Theriaca*, as she does not do anything wrong here to make her deserve such a qualification. Perhaps the poet was aware of the punning on Helen's ἑλ-root in earlier poetry and wanted to combine this with the αἰνο-prefix. Helen is thus not αἰνή per se, but she is a terrible destroyer (αἰνο- and ἑλ-) when it comes to the *haimorrhoos*, whose spine she violently crushes.

Alternatively the name may be an indication of Nic.'s point of view on the guilt of Helen and thus perhaps of a certain tradition he chose to follow con-

cerning the dubious role played by Helen in the events leading up to the Trojan war. Cf. Lyc. 102, where the poet finds fault with Helen's unlawful escape with Paris, *καὶ τὴν ἄνυμφον πόρτιν ἁρπάσας λύκος*, calling Helen, with regard to Paris, unwedded, even though she is Menelaus' wife. Nic. is evidently not afraid to slander Helen, unlike Stesichorus, who was punished with blindness for telling an improper version of the myth, and had to write his *Palinode* in order to be cured again. Whether Nic. was the first to use the name or not, it is evidently an imitation of the Homeric examples and their later variants.

**πολύστροιβον παρὰ Νεῖλον:** the adj. is only found here, and in *Al.* 6 (of the sea). In previous poetry, starting from Hes. *Th.* 338, the Nile was not given an epithet in particular; Homer does not use the name Νεῖλος, but calls the river Αἴγυπτος, just like the land itself (Heubeck etc. 1988, 222). The fact that Homer, unlike Hesiod (*Th.* 338), does not seem to know the name of the Nile has been interpreted in antiquity as proof that Hesiod is the younger, *καὶ ἐκ τούτου φαίνεται Ἡσίοδος Ὁμήρου νεώτερος· καὶ γὰρ Ὅμηρος Αἴγυπτον καλεῖ τὸν Νεῖλον*, Σ *Th.* 338; see West 1966, 260–261. Aeschylus alone uses six different adj.'s to qualify the river, although the Nile generally appears without one. Nic. perhaps wanted to adorn the river with an epithet that at least had an epic ring to it, even though it did not belong to proper epic diction. It does, however, seem to be varying on the Homeric line-end πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης, which is metrically equivalent and occurs eight times in Homer; cf. 890 n. Nic. thus produces a combination that follows Hesiod in acknowledging an awareness of the river Nile, thus correcting Homer whose lack of knowledge of the Nile could be interpreted as a sign of his fallibility. Yet the additional use of a variant of Homer's epithet brings Nic.'s two literary forebears together; cf. 59 n.

**Κάνωβον:** Menelaus' helmsman was known by name well before Nic., as a testimonium of Hecataeus (cited by Aristides, *Aigyptios* 108 Lenz-Behr) makes clear (*FGrH* 1a, 1, F 308): ὁ τοίνυν Κάνωβος ὄνομά ἐστι Μενελάου κυβερνήτου, ὡς Ἑκαταῖός τε δή φησιν ὁ λογοποιὸς καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς φήμης, οὗ τελευτήσαντος περὶ τὸν τόπον τοῦτον λείπεται τοὔνομα, ταυτὶ φημί, ὡς Ἕλληνες λέγουσιν, ἐπεὶ ἔγωγε ἤκουσα. Apparently Nic. has incorporated a second aetiological myth here, as the place where Canobus (alternatively spelt Canopus) will find his death and will be buried will be named after him. In later times the mythological helmsman came te be worshipped as Osiris Canopus by the Egyptians (Felber 1999, 247–248). The use of Canobus as a place and not a person is clear from Solon 28 *IEG*$^2$, as cited in Plu. *Sol.* 26.1 Νείλου ἐπὶ προχοῇσι, Κανωβίδος ἐγγύθεν ἀκτῆς, Herodotus (2.15, 97), who does not seem to have known the story, and from

later sources, e.g. Arist. *Oec.* 1352a31, Plb. 5.39.1 and Tac. *Ann.* 2.60: *orsus oppido a Canopo. condidere id Spartani ob sepultum illic rectorem navis Canopum, qua tempestate Menelaus Graeciam repetens diversum ad mare terramque Libyam deiectus*. Strabo tells us that Canopus was a city (17.1.17), Κάνωβος δ' ἐστὶ πόλις … ἐπώνυμος Κανώβου τοῦ Μενελάου κυβερνήτου, ἀποθανόντος αὐτόθι. According to ps.-Scylax (106.5 Shipley), however, it was a deserted island, where a μνῆμα of the deceased helmsman could be found. If we are to understand that this μνῆμα was a visible grave monument, then Nic.'s mythological story gives an aetiology both for the μνῆμα and for the name of the Canopic mouth of the Nile delta; see Introduction 5.8 and 8.3.

After his death Canobus was catasterised, a fact referred to in a fragment of Eudoxus (fr. 75a, b) and in the *Catasterismi* of Eratosthenes (*Cat.* 37 *MG*). But the story was apparently told by Apollonius Rhodius as well (Σ *Ther.* 303–304, 11), as can be inferred from the few lines left from a poem about Canobus, which, according to Powell, dealt with his catasterism, and not with the foundation of a city (*CA* 1–3, pp. 4–5); see Van Krevelen 1961, 128–131; Krevans 2000, 76–83; Sistakou 2008b, 311–340.

The death of Canobus is striking since this is the second time Menelaus loses a helmsman on his way home from Troy. In *Od.* 3.282 ff. Nestor tells Telemachus of the death of Phrontis, son of Onetor. He was slain gently by Phoebus, while steering near cape Sunium, whereas later on Menelaus' fleet is split by a storm at cape Malea, causing him to land on Egypt's coast; the rest of his fleet lands in Crete. This Phrontis, Menelaus' helmsman, is elsewhere known as Cinadus (Paus. 3.22.10–11); it is not improbable that we find two converging traditions here. Losing one's helmsman on a dangerous voyage seems to be a topos, as the same happens to the Argonauts: in A.R. 2.854 Tiphys dies and is replaced by Ancaeus (2.894–898). Similarly, in Verg. *A.* 6.337–339, Aeneas' helmsman Palinurus find his death. Elsewhere we learn of Odysseus' loss of his steersman Baius (Lyc. 694, Sil. 8.539, 12.114, St.Byz. 2.19, Str. 5.4.6, Serv. ad *Aen.* 6.107, 9.707), based on *Od.* 12.410–414, where Odysseus' steersman (who at this time is still anonymous) is fatally hit by the mast which crushes all the bones in his skull. Only Phrontis appears to find his death at sea; Tiphys is overcome by illness, whereas Palinurus falls overboard, reaches the shore, but is murdered there. Baius' name lives on both in Mount Baia on the island of Cephallenia (St. Byz. s.v. Βαία) and in the Campanian Baiae, to which Lycophron, Silius etc. are referring. The death of Palinurus is likewise clearly aetiologically connected to Cape Palinurus near Sicily. Although Williams (1960, 199) points at the possible connection with *Od.* 3.282, a connection between Nic.'s aetiological story of the death of a helmsman and Vergil's imitation of it makes better sense; for Vergil as a reader of Nic. see Introduction 9.2. That losing one's helmsman

on an epic voyage was a topos is confirmed in Lucian's *True Stories* (*VH* 1.37); apparently Lucian considered it to be conventional enough to be included in a parody.

**313 Θώνιος ἐν ψαμάθοις:** Gow & Scholfield (1953, 176) explain that "Thonis was at the Canobic mouth of the Nile and named after the king who received Helen and Menelaus in Egypt". This means that Menelaus' visit to Egypt is connected to two eponymous places, viz. the Canopic mouth of the Nile and the location of Thonis nearby. Nothing is known of the reception of Nic. among Alexandrian audiences, but Nic.'s concern with Egypt and its delta (175–176, 200–208, 310–313, 566) may be occasioned by a desire to cater for Alexandrian readers. The association and identification of Canopus with Alexandria is exemplified by Dionysius Periegetes, who periphrastically refers to his hometown Alexandria as the τέμενος περίπυστον Ἀμυκλαίοιο Κανώβου (D.P. 13); see Brodersen 1994, 123. Aelian (*NA* 15.14), using Nic.'s account for his own work, seems to interpret the mythical king Thonis as a temporal indication, Θώνιδος βασιλεύοντος. For Nic.'s interest in remote geography see Introduction 8.5.

**τύψε:** for the lack of an augment cf. 202 n. The attack of the *haemorrhois* is presented as an act of revenge for the fact that Canobus has trodden on her earlier on. Surprisingly, the snake does not strike back immediately, but waits patiently until the helmsman falls asleep after which she bites his neck. The snake is thus again portrayed less as an animal that acts upon its nature, but rather as a sentient being with evil intent; cf. 8 n. and Introduction 8.1.

**314 βαρὺν ἤρυγεν ἰόν:** a phrase adapted from another intertextual passage on snakes (see 221 n.), as Theoc. 24.19 has βαρὺν δ' ἐξέπτυον ἰόν at line-end. There Theocritus describes the two violent snakes sent by Hera to devour the young Heracles. Nic. has changed the verb πτύω to the similar ἐρεύγομαι, both meaning 'to belch out a fluid'; the combination of ἐρεύγομαι and ἰόν was already used in 232. Just like the snakes in Theocritus' mythological story, the snake described in Nic.'s story of Canobus is overcome in the end. However, unlike the victim in Theocritus' story, which deals with an invincible hero, the victim in Nic.'s story dies: in Nic.'s world there is no room for heroes. Only the attentive pupil will prevail in the end.

**315 αἱμοροῒς θήλεια:** for the different ending designating the female cf. 305. The single -ρ- (here and in 318 and 321), as opposed to the double -ρρ- in 282 and 305 follows the Homeric convention of adapting words to fit the hexameter (cf. Ὀδυσσεύς—Ὀδυσεύς).

**316–317 μέσον ὁλκόν … | … νωταῖα:** the chiastic placement of the order object-verb/verb-object is underlined by the verbal similarity of the paronomastic -θλασε and θραῦσε.

**317 ῥάχις δ' ἐξέδραμε γυίων:** in Aelian's interpretation (*NA* 15.13) Helen not only broke the snake's back, but also extracted the poison (φάρμακον) from the protruding spine. He adds, however, that he does not know what she planned to do with it, συνεῖσαν τὴν Ἑλένην τοῦ δακέτου τὴν ἰσχὺν κατάξαι μὲν αὐτοῦ τὴν ῥάχιν, ἐξελεῖν δὲ τὸ φάρμακον. ἐς τίνα δὲ ἄρα χρείαν ἔσπευσε λαβεῖν τὸ θησαύρισμα τοῦτο, οὐκ οἶδα. Aelian's remark seems to be based on *Ther*. 110–111, where Nic. informs us about the fact that the spine contains the dangerous venom, in addition to the fangs.

**318 ἐξόθεν:** not found elsewhere. The adv. seems to be a conflation of the common temporal expression ἐξ οὗ, 'since' (19× in Homer), and ὅθεν, which is often used to express causal relations. Here both meanings apply, as aetiological stories give the reason for the origin of a phenomenon, as well as the starting point of that origin in the past. For an aetiology which is rounded off by ἐξ οὗ cf. A.R. 2.909.

**αἱμορόοι:** see 315 n.

**319 κακηπελίῃ:** apparently an adaptation of the Homeric ὀλιγηπελία (*Od*. 5.468). The *hapax legomenon* was already noticed by Callimachus, who changed it to εὐηπελία ('prosperity') in *Cer*. 135; for other references see Hopkinson 1984, 184. In 878 Nic. uses the word again, however, as a participle.

### *320–333 The* Sepedon

After the *haemorrhois* the next snake that is treated by Nic. is the *sepedon* (sand rattlesnake, *Echis pyramidum*, Leitz § 20, or perhaps *Aspis vipera*; see Spatafora 2007a, 129), who, according to the poet, resembles the *haemorrhoos* somewhat. Although the name of the *sepedon* (which seems to be related to the *seps*, a different snake to which the *sepedon* is compared, see Jacques 2002, 117) might be a Nicandrean invention, the etymology clearly refers to the process of putrefaction (σήπω), which seems to be just what Nic. is describing in 332–333. Once again the poet does not tell us what happens to the victim in the end.

**Εὖ δ' ἄν … γνοίης:** see 209 n. and Introduction 6.10.

**321 στίβον ἀντί' ὀκέλλει:** for the metaphorical image of a snake 'sailing' (ὀκέλλω) its path see 295 n., where the same verb is used. Here the smooth motion of the *sepedon* is contrasted to the crooked movement of the *haemorrhois* (cf. 318).

**322 ἔμπλην:** 'moreover', a strengthened variant of πλήν, and a rare Homeric adv. (*Il.* 2.526). Apart from [Hes.] *Sc.* 372 and Archil. 202 *IEG*[2] (Σ *Ther.* 322) it is only used by Hellenistic imitators; Call. *Del.* 73, Lyc. 1029. As Spatafora (2007, 129) explains, 'except' is not possible here, as it is superfluous next to ἄμμορον.

**324 κράατι:** this particular dat. is found only once before Nic., in *Od.* 22.218, thus constituting another pointed reuse of a Homeric peculiarity. The appearance in poetry seems at least partly based on metrical reasons.

**ἐλάχεια:** another epicism (the female occurs in *h.Ap.* 197). Originally the adj. was the positive of which the comp. and superl. ἐλάσσων and ἐλάχιστος were formed, but as a positive the adj. is rare. In *h.Ap.* 197 it is used to denote stature, which is just how Nic. applies it, this time, however, not to the Graces and the Horae, but to the apparent length of a snake. Other Hellenistic poets picked up the rare positive (Euph. *CA* 11.2, p. 32 = 188 Van Groningen = 179 Lightfoot, ἐλαχείῃ) and even used the masc. (Call. *Hec.* fr. 26 H. = 525 Pf., ἐλαχὺν δόμον) or the neut. (Antip. Sid. *AP* 7.498.1 = *HE* 540, ἐλαχὺ σκάφος), forms that had probably ceased to exist a long time ago.

Nic.'s somewhat vague description is clarified by Aelian in his description of the *sepedon* (*NA* 15.18). Due to its peculiar movement the *sepedon* seems to be much smaller than the *haemorrhois*, though this is deceptive, as the *sepedon* is of the same size.

**325 ἐσσυμένῃ:** an epic part. (σεύω), limited to poetry. The perf. of this verb is frequently used in Homer, always with a present sense, although its most common appearance is as the adv. ἐσσυμένως.

**μέλας ... ἰός:** perhaps an imitation of Thgn. 451, τοῦ χροιῆς καθύπερθε μέλας οὐχ ἅπτεται ἰός, where both μέλας and ἰός occupy the same *sedes*. In Thgn. 447–452 the speaker compares himself to gold that is so pure that no verdigris ever takes hold. Nic., once more playing with the different meanings of ἴος (cf. ἰοδόκοι 184, ἰοειδέα 243, ἰοειδέϊ 886; cf. 305 n.), has applied the word for rust or patina in its normal sense of poison. The reference is striking as both texts are perfect opposites: the Theognidean subject is impervious to the destruction of the μέλας ἰός, as opposed to the Nicandrean victim, whose body is

entirely (πᾶν δέμας, emphatically at line-opening in 328) destroyed as the black poison pervades the body.

**329 ὡς γήρεια καταψηχθέντος ἀκάνθης:** varying on *Al.* 126 (οἷά τε δὴ γήρεια νέον τεθρυμμένα κάκτου) in tone, structure, and phrasing. Incidentally, in *Od.* 5.328 ἀκάνθας (at line-end) is the only instance of thistledown in Homer. This is not the only instance of Nic. applying a rustic simile to a heinous or dangerous context, cf. 296–297, 340, 387; see also Spatafora 2005, 259 and Introduction 8.8. The hair that is falling off all over the victim's skin is compared to rubbed thistledown, as both are scattered by the wind once they have come off. The idea of disease being an intrusion—quite literally in the case of envenomation—of nature into culture and therefore a form of *miasma*, soiling the body, is found earlier in Greek literature, e.g. S. *Ph.* 758–760; see Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 83 n. 3 and Parker 1983, 217 and 248. Here the idea takes form in the shape of a simile in which nature and culture are hardly distinguishable any longer. According to Kidd (1997, 491) Nic. is imitating Aratus here (as well as in *Al.* 126), as Aratus is the first to use γήρειον ('thistledown') in 921, λευκῆς γήρειον ἀκάνθης, at line-end. The image of thistledown, dispersing as it is rubbed, is known from bucolic poetry: Theoc. 6.15–17, ὡς ἀπ' ἀκάνθας | ταὶ καπυραὶ χαῖται, τὸ καλὸν θέρος ἁνίκα φρύγει | καὶ φεύγει ('like dry thistledown, parched by summer's heat, she flees …'). For the incongruence between the masc. καταψηχθέντος and the fem. ἀκάνθης cf. 129 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**331 ῥαίονται:** as plur. subject the hairs of the head and the eyebrows are understood, as is clear from θρίξ in 328.

**333 ἀργινόεσσαν:** a rare adj. and a *dis legomenon* in Homer (*Il.* 2.647, 656), where it means 'bright-shining white', said of hills or mountains that are white because of the chalky soil, a use also found in *h.Pan.* 12. Apollonius picked up the word and uses it in 2.738 (of glistening rime) and 4.1607 (of a horse's shining bit). In Nic. the epithet qualifies ἔφηλιν, a kind of leprosy which, according to the poet, is inflicted by the snake's bite. It is striking that even such a dreadful infliction is given an epic adj. Nic.'s liking for poetic expressions always seems to have priority over sympathy.

**ἐπισσεύουσιν:** a verb from the realm of heroic epic, used sometimes in hostile sense in a context of battle, of attackers hurrying towards their victims, eager to slay (*Il.* 5.438, 459; 17.678), which suits the context of this line in the *Theriaca*. But the verb is also used for rushing fire (*Il.* 17.737) or water (*Od.* 5.314), therefore we need not assume a personification of the infliction as a threatening agent.

### *334–358* *The* Dipsas

The short description of the *sepedon* is followed by the more extensive treatment of the *dipsas* (Persian false hornviper, *Pseudocerastes persicus*, Leitz § 22), which, like the *sepedon*, owes its name to a particular quality of the infliction it causes, as is explained in the fable contained in this passage (350–358). The short account of the *dipsas* itself starts with a description of its appearance and its bite, followed by a gentle rustic simile in which the victim of the *dipsas*' bite is compared to a drinking bull, only to be concluded by a lurid statement about the victim's end. Subsequently the mythical background of the *dipsas*' condition is expounded. Although formally just another account of a snake, this passage is from a literary point of view one of the key passages, as it contains: (i) the famous acrostic, (ii) the obscure myth of the gift of Youth to man, combined with (iii) an aetiological fable, (iv) implicit references to Hesiod's treatment of the primeval ages of man, and (v) references to the Prometheus-story in both Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.

**334** **ναὶ μήν:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.7.

**διψάδος:** according to Nic. this particular snake was called *dipsas*, a name confirmed by later authors (Luc. *Dips*., Ael. *NA* 6.51), who, however, probably used Nic. as their source. Antipater uses διψάς as an adj. in combination with ἔχιδνα (viper) (Antip. Sid. *AP* 7.172.5 = *HE* 316), but the differences between the *dipsas* and the viper are explained by Nic. in the following lines.

**335** **θανάτου δὲ θοώτερος ἵξεται αἶσα:** all but a copy of 120, on which see n. Although *variatio* is a marked aspect of Nic.'s poetic diction—and in general of Hellenistic poetry indeed—occasionally he resorts to repetition (cf. 283 and 488 n.). Although this may seem surprising in an author so markedly striving for variation, it is a feature of all Greek poetry, in which short-term repetition is never considered a breach of style from an aesthetical point of view. Cf. Fehling (1969), who has shown that repetition (whether intended as a *figura* or not) is quintessential to Greek speech.

**336** **οἷσιν ἐνισκίμψῃ:** see 140 n.

**βλοσυρὸν δάκος:** the adj. is a *dis legomenon* in Homer (*Il.* 7.212 and 11.36) and of disputed meaning, since both 'shaggy' and 'grim' are possible, referring to the appearance of one's look; see Leumann 1950, 141–148. Two instances in ps.-Hesiod's *Scutum* (147 and 175, of lions) do not help much to decide, but in 250 the adj. is applied to Κῆρες, which makes clear that 'grim' is a possible

interpretation. The adj., however, is referring rather to the feelings of fear they convey, than to the specific traits. In Phoc. fr. 2.3–5 Gentili-Prato, however, the adj. refers to a sow and must mean 'bristly'. Later authors use the interpretation 'terrible' (A. *Eum.* 167, Tim. 791.83 Hordern), without any connection to the look of someone's face. Among Hellenistic poets we find both the Homeric meanings of 'grim' (Call. *Cer.* 52, of a lion, with Hopkinson's note, 1984, 126; A.R. 4.1437, with Livrea 1973a, 405; Rengakos 1994, 66–67) and the later use of 'baneful' (e.g. in A.R. 2.740, of the headland leading to the underworld), which applies to Nic. here as well. For δάκος see 115 n.

**337** **ὑποζοφόεις:** only here; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**338** **δάχματι:** see 119 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**339** **χείλε' … δίψης:** a particularly stressed image, describing dry lips that are dry with parching thirst; cf. the similar stress on cold in 251. The effect of the *dipsas*' bite is pointed out strongly to the reader, or, as Toohey (1996, 65) puts it: "the bite produces a thirstiness of epic proportions". According to Hopkinson (1988, 144) this verse is "a variant (AbaB) of the 'Golden Line'", a term explained in more detail in Hopkinson 1984, 87; see also Introduction 6.8. The term is used to indicate well-balanced lines that show an interlacing order of congruent nouns (A, B) and adj.'s (a, b), ideally with the verb in the middle, neatly separating the first and last half of the line. The phenomenon is found more frequently among Hellenistic poets (e.g. Theoc. 1.31, 16.62, 18.29, Call. *Del.* 14, *Cer.* 9, A.R. 1.521, 1.917, 3.1215, showing various patterns) than in earlier poetry; the only Homeric example found by Hopkinson is *Il.* 15.685 ὣς Αἴας ἐπὶ πολλὰ θοάων ἴκρια νηῶν | φοίτα; see McLennan 1975, 97 and Reed 1997, 49–51. Hopkinson's qualification (1988, 144) of *Ther.* 339, "elegant presentation, horrible subject, piquant contrast", points in addition at the priority of grace in Nic.'s poem: as long as his hexameters meet the aesthetic level of his peers there is no need for their contents to be equally graceful. Indeed, Nic. often seems to aim at a perfect balance between aesthetically gratifying verses on the one hand, and lurid contents on the other.

**340–342** **αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' … | … φόρτον:** an elaborate reworking of A.R. 4.1447–1449; the similarity was signalled by Cazzaniga (1959, 128); Livrea (1973a, 408) marks the relevance of A.R. 4.1449, but excludes 1447–1448 from the comparison. Although the verbal similarity between the two passages is slight, context, word placement, content and the use of synonyms leave little doubt about Nic.'s source for 340–342. The lines from the *Argonautica* are part of the Argonauts'

adventures in Libya, and the following lines are spoken by the Hesperid Aegle, telling of thirsty Heracles' swerving in the desert: αὐτὰρ ὅ γ', ἄμφω χεῖρε πέδῳ καὶ στέρνον ἐρείσας, | ῥωγάδος ἐκ πέτρης πίεν ἄσπετον, ὄφρα βαθεῖαν | νηδύν, φορβάδι ἶσος ἐπιπροπεσών, ἐκορέσθη. A comparison between the two passages yields the following points of relevance: (i) Opening with αὐτὰρ ὅ γ', Nic. retains the Apollonian line-opening as a pointer for his readers. (ii) With δέχεται ποτόν, a rendering of Apollonius' similar πίεν ἄσπετον, Nic. follows Apollonius in placing the combination in the middle of the line, preceding the conjunction εἰσόκε, varying on ὄφρα. (iii) The enjambment of Apollonius' νηδύν is set back by Nic. to the end of the previous line. (iv) Nic.'s χανδόν expresses Apollonius' ἄσπετον as regards content. (v) Apollonius' φορβάδι ἶσος ἐπιπροπεσών "stooped forward like a grazing animal" (transl. Race) while drinking water from the well is the model for Nic.'s bowed bull (ταῦρος … νενευκώς). (vi) Heracles' βαθεῖαν νηδύν can be satisfied by having its fill of water, but for Nic.'s victim the excess of a βαθεῖα νηδύς becomes his undoing, as the belly becomes so full that it eventually bursts.

If the wider context is taken into account another striking element can be pointed out. In A.R. 4.1432–1434 we are told by the Hesperid Aegle that Heracles has just slain the snake that guards the golden apples: it is after the hero has overcome the snake that he is suffering from thirst, for which he finds an adequate solution. By contrast, in the *Theriaca* it is the victim that is overcome by the snake, and for the subsequent thirst there proves to be no solution. In a world of epic heroes Heracles is victorious over both snake and thirst; in Nic.'s ordinary world, devoid of heroes, man is powerless against both enemies. The reference to Apollonius makes Nic.'s description even more harrowing, as it turns the outcome in Apollonius' passage around. Whereas in the *Argonautica* Heracles, suffering from thirst, eventually finds relief, for the victim in the *Theriaca* the exact same relief proves to be fatal.

**ἠΰτε ταῦρος … νενευκώς**: a striking simile, comparing the sight of a drinking bull to that of the victim of a bite from the *dipsas*; the same image is invoked in *Al.* 495–496, ἢν δέ τις ἀζαλέῃ πεπιεσμένος αὐχένα δίψῃ | ἐκ ποταμοῦ ταυρηδὸν ἐπιπροπεσὼν ποτὸν ἴσχῃ ('if someone whose throat is constrained by parching thirst falls on his knees and draws water from a stream like a bull …'). The comparison is twofold as both the drinking and the bowing of their heads to the water are similar. But whereas the rustic image of a bull drinking from the open water of a stream can easily be imagined to be part of a pastoral landscape, the victim's excessive thirst and fatal consumption of water to cool his affliction stands in grim contrast with the calm and pleasant image of the bull. The simile is carefully placed before the heinous death of the victim, providing the

external addressee with a moment of diversion in suspense, before the final description of the victim's end is given briefly, though not lacking in physical detail; see Introduction 8.7.

341 **χανδόν:** adv. 'with one's mouth open', 'greedily' (cf. χάσκω/χαίνω and χανδάνω). A Homeric *hapax legomenon*, used in *Od.* 21.294 by Antinous when rebuking the disguised Odysseus for being a low beggar who can only muster enough courage when he has had too much wine to drink, i.e. drinking χανδόν. The root χαν- is found elsewhere in Homer in *Il.* 12.350, of drowning at sea, i.e. taking in mouthfuls of salt water; in either case the adv. has a negative connotation. The *hapax legomenon* was picked up by two Alexandrian authors before Nic. In Call. fr. 178.11 Harder the adv. is used in its Homeric sense of drinking wine greedily, in this case of uncivilised Thracians, who guzzle unmixed wine in large quantities. The second instance is Lyc. 1425, χανδὸν κελαινὴν δίψαν αἰονωμένων ('as they quench with open mouth their black thirst'), referring—albeit veiled—to the thirst of Xerxes' army marching home through Thrace (Mooney 1921, 154), which may well have affected Nic.'s choice for the adv. here; a metapoetical reading, relevant for Callimachus' use, does not seem to apply to Nic.'s instance here.

**ἐκρήξειε:** the image of the belly literally bursting at the navel because of the excessive amount of water is particularly lurid. What is even more striking, however, is the lack of compassion shown by the author for the moribund victim of the affliction. Without a single word of sympathy the poet proceeds with an aetiological story, showing again that his poetry does not need to be interspersed with emotions to be aesthetically successful. According to Toohey (1996, 65) "these lines convey a bizarre gratification in the observation of situations involving extreme human suffering".

**ὑπεραχθέα φόρτον:** the adj. occurs only once before Nic., in the same *sedes*, in Theoc. 11.37, said of the Cyclops' baskets that are full of cheese. There the image of 'overburdened' is a positive one, as it shows Polyphemus' rich life within a pastoral, idyllic context. Here the adj. is used in a reverse way: whereas the Cyclops' bounty brings forth a copious life, the victim of a bite from the *dipsas* will drink himself literally to death by the excess of water taken in.

343–358 The description of the *dipsas* and the infliction it imparts is rounded off with a short aetiogical story, in which the nature of the *dipsas*' bite is explained. Although the story does not seem to be of great importance for the didactic flow of Nic.'s account of different snakes, it contains several key ele-

ments with regard to the author's poetics: (i) the acrostic with the author's name in lines 345–353, (ii) the reference to Prometheus in 347, (iii) the development of the story into a fable, (iv) a multiple aetiology, (v) references to the primeval, prelapsarian Golden Age and (vi) the multiple use of kennings.

The outline of the story, which is told somewhat elliptically, is as follows. In days of old mankind betrayed Prometheus, and was consequently rewarded by Zeus with the special gift of Youth. Having grown tired from carrying it they place the gift on the back of an ass to carry, but the ass, which is suffering from thirst, runs off to look for a place to drink. It finds a pool (or spring?) guarded by a snake, which allows the ass to drink, but in return demands the gift carried by the ass. As the ass complies, it gets to drink from the water; the snake in return receives the gift of Youth.

**343 ὠγύγιος:** the adj., hardly found outside of poetry, refers to primeval times. Although originally the adj. of Ogyges (cf. A.R. 3.1178), a mythical king of Attica (whose name is probably pre-Greek, see Frey 2000, 1123), the word was used generally as meaning 'very ancient, from the earliest ages on', as in Hes. *Th.* 806. According to West (1966, 378), however, the meaning of the word is unknown. The traditional interpretation of 'very ancient' seems appropriate in later authors as well; cf. McLennan 1977, 43, and *AP* 7.42 (adesp.), in which the author, praising the *Aetia*, tells us Callimachus wove the origins of 'primeval heroes', ὠγυγίων ἡρώων. That Nic. borrowed the word from Hesiod is, however, very likely, as the story told in 344–358 is very Hesiodic in vein; see Magnelli 2008, 166 n. 12.

**ἄρα:** a clear case of the poet's technique of pseudo-associative composition. The particle, expressing surprise at the unexpected thought occurring to the didactic teacher, creates a sense of spontaneity. The teacher conveys 'come to think of it, there is an old story …' as if he is surprised at the fact that the relevance of the story, stored in the back of his mind, only comes to him now, following the previous information on the *dipsas*-snake; cf. Introduction 5.7.

**μῦθος:** originally the noun was used—apart from plain speech or words in general—for stories, without the distinction between true and false. Later it came to mean fiction, as opposed to λόγος, 'historic tuth'. The story told here could well be considered an αἶνος, a 'fable or other story with an implied message in it for the hearer' (West 1978, 205), but μῦθος serves the exact same purpose in e.g. Aesopus (non-mythological story with a message) and Palaephatus (mythological story with a message). Here we have a story, clearly mythological and therefore fictitious, yet used to explain the natural, hence 'true' phe-

nomenon of the thirst caused by the *dipsas*. For the use of μῦθος for myth and fable alike (as both are applicable in this passage) see Van Dijk 1997, 84–88.

**ἐν αἰζηοῖσι:** 'among the people'. αἰζηός is a poetic synonym of ἄνθρωπος, and although Homer uses it particularly of young men, other authors do not seem to make this distinction; cf. Hes. *Th.* 863, on which West (1966, 394) comments that "the word is used of various kinds of working man", which does not single out youths. In addition, McLennan (1977, 107) points at Hesiod's mention of a τεσσαρακονταετὴς αἰζηός (*Op.* 441). According to Hopkinson Nic. creates a verbal contrast here between ὠγύγιος and αἰζηός as the latter has overtones of 'young and lusty', but since none of the other Hellenistic poets seem to maintain the Homeric connotation (cf. A.R. 4.268, Nic. *Al.* 176, Call. *Jov.* 70, fr. 551 Pf.), such an interpretation is less evident. If there is a verbal contrast to be felt between ὠγύγιος and αἰζηός, it is rather the idea of something very old, current among something very recent, viz. the contemporary people of the poet's age.

**φορεῖται:** for the use of such verbs without a concrete subject to introduce a story cf. 10 (ἐνέπουσιν), where the same technique is found of showing one's detachment to the story that is about to be told. Another example is Arat. 100–101, λόγος γε μὲν ἐντρέχει ἄλλος | ἀνθρώποις, where the author has another story in mind, viz. that as told by Hesiod. The story in *Ther.* 343–358 is known to have been treated by Ibycus (fr. 342 *PMGF*) and Sophocles (fr. 362 *TrGF* from the play Κωφοὶ Σάτυροι), but there are several reasons to assume that Nic. invented at least part of the story, although single elements existed earlier. If this is true, the general use of a verb like φορεῖται may well be an authorial device, employed to convince the reader that the story is in fact current and not a creation of the poet.

344 **ὁπότ' οὐρανόν … πρεσβίστατον αἷμα:** by means of this clause the reader is taken back to the mythical primeval era when the dominion of Zeus came into existence. The era of Cronus, associated in the *Works and Days* with a care-free life and absence of old age (109–117), had just ended, which is reflected in Nic.'s story: after the Golden Age of Cronus the rule of Zeus follows, in which the absence of old age must come to an end for man.

**Κρόνου … αἷμα:** for this use of αἷμα, implying offspring cf. Theoc. 24.73 Περσήιον αἷμα, said of Alcmena, and Call. fr. 67.7 Harder αἷμα τὸ μὲν γενεῆς Εὐξαντίδος.

**πρεσβίστατον:** see 3 n. on κυδίστατε. The superl. either means 'oldest', in which case Nic. follows the Homeric tradition in which Zeus was older than Poseidon

and Hades (*Il.* 13.355, 15.166[7]), or 'most revered' in which case Nic. may be following a different tradition (cf. Call. *Jov.* 58), which followed Hesiod in making Zeus the youngest of the gods (*Th.* 478 ὁπλότατον, and 457, unless the enumeration is not chronological; see McLennan 1977, 95).

**345–353** Here we find one of the best-known features of the poem: the acrostic showing the poet's name (ΝΙΚΑΝΔΡΟΣ) in full;[8] see also Introduction 5.9. The acrostic was discovered by Lobel (1928, 114), who also discovered a defective version of the same acrostic in the *Alexipharmaca*, which, despite being not entirely accurate (σΙΚκΝΔΡΟΣ), nevertheless seems to show the author's signature in writing. Although these acrostics are not unique in Greek literature, the phenomenon is not very common either; see Vogt 1967, Courtney 1990, Cameron 1995, 37–38, and Danielewicz 2005. For the case of Nic. the following observations are of interest:

(i) One of the functions of an acrostic is its ability to act as a seal (σφραγίς) with which an author can sign his work. This type of acrostic was used by ps.-Eudoxus (ΕΥΔΟΞΟΥ ΤΕΧΝΗ, fr. 137) and allegedly by the Sicilian playwright of comedies Epicharmus (D.L. 8.78); see Courtney 1990, 9 and Vogt 1967, 83. It is clear that this is the type employed by Nic. in the *Theriaca*.
(ii) In the *Theriaca*, however, a second *sphragis* is inserted in 957, not as an acrostic, but as a clear statement of the poet's name in conclusion of the poem. The poet has thus provided his work with a rare combined *sphragis*. It is therefore less likely that the acrostic primarily serves as

7 In *Od.* 13.142 Zeus calls his brother Poseidon πρεσβύτατον, which implies that Zeus is recognising Poseidon as being older. This could mean that the Hesiodic tradition in which Zeus is called the youngest existed parallel to Homer's version, even within the Homeric epics. Σ B 13.142 Dindorf remarks πρεσβύτατον] οὐ καθ' ἡλικίαν, ἀλλα τιμιώτατον· ὡς Ἥρα "καί με πρεσβυτάτην τέκετο" (*Il.* 4.59); Σ V 13.142 Dindorf ἐντιμότατον. ἀλλαχοῦ γὰρ λέγει ἀλλα Ζεὺς πρότερος ἐγεγόνει (*Il.* 13.355). But as these *scholia* are relatively late they seem to be explaining difficulties away, rather than recognising two separate traditions.

8 Damschen (2004, 92 n. 9) tentatively proposes to read a second acrostic in the poem, viz. ΡΑΦΕ ΒΗΤΑ in *Ther.* 1–8, suggesting that our text is in fact the second book (γραφὴ βῆτα, but spelt with an epsilon in the pre-Euclidean alphabet, viz. ΓΡΑΦΕ). This would, however, require that the very title of our text was ΓΡΑΦΕ ΒΗΤΑ, to account for the missing initial gamma of the acrostic. Considering the anachronistic spelling of γραφή, the awkward need of ΓΡΑΦΕ ΒΗΤΑ as a title, the fact that nothing is known of a division of the poem in multiple books, and the impression that the *Theriaca* is a self-contained poem as we know it, Damschen's interesting suggestion is not very likely at best.

a way of securing the authorship of Nic., since the *sphragis* in 957 has the same purpose; see Vogt (1967, 88). Courtney (1990, 12) points at the possible imitation by Nic. of ps.-Epicharmus, who may have been using combined seals too.

(iii) Another reason for the inclusion of an acrostic can be found in the poet's wish to show his awareness of the existence of an acrostic in the poetry of one of his predecessor. The acrostics pointed at would presumably be the well-known instances in Arat. 783–787 (λεπτή, detected by Jacques 1960, 48–61), 803–806 (πᾶσα, detected by Levitan 1979, although Kidd argues that the latter has no significance and therefore looks incidental; Kidd 1997, 446), 807–808 (μέση, Haslam 1992) and 808–812 (σημη, Levitan 1979). As Aratus is one of Nic.'s main precursors, particularly within the didactic genre, such a reference is not unlikely, despite the fact that Nic., unlike Aratus, incorporates his name in an acrostic; see Clauss 2006, 169. Moreover, the use of an acrostic as a way of imitating a predecessor is perhaps attested in the *Phaenomena* itself, as Aratus' use of λεπτή could be in turn an imitation of Homer, who accidentally wrote an acrostic in the opening lines of the *Iliad* 24 (λευκή, 1–5); see Jacques 1960, 48–61; Vogt 1967, 84; Kidd 1997, 445–446. For the relevance of Nic.'s inserted name in relation to the presence of Aratus' name (ἄρρητος ~ Ἄρητος) in the *Phaenomena* see 957 n.

(iv) The acrostic is inserted not only "in the most ornamental passage of the whole poem" (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 177), but also in a marked part of the *Theriaca*. Digressions are rare in the poem and the aetiological story told here is among the longest. It is therefore likely that there is a connection between the two, particularly since the acrostic's prime function does not seem to be the prevention of forgery: it seems safe to conclude that the acrostic was not intended to remain unnoticed. The acrostic's purpose should therefore not be classified as a "Schutz der Texte gegen Ausfälle, Einschübe und Plagiate" as Damschen (2004, 92 with n. 9) suggests, since forgery of acrostics is relatively easy. Vogt (1967, 88) points at the connection between Nic. giving his name and the fact that the aetiology aims at explaining the name of the *dipsas*, which is the only *aetion* in the poem that is concerned with a name: as in the *Phaenomena*, the acrostic thus plays an aesthetic role within the context of the passage; cf. Introduction 5.9. Moreover, as Sullivan (2013, 236) suggests, Nicander is alluding to another Hellenistic fable here, viz. the second *Iamb* of Callimachus. There the poet's addressee, Andronicus, is connected with the power of speech, won by man and lost by the animals. 'Victory for man' (ἀνδρό–νικος) has thus been taken up by

Nicander and turned into 'victory over man' (νίκ-ανδρος), subverting the Callimachean precedent.

(v) Although Nic.'s name appears in an *aetion* concerned with a name (viz. the explanation of the name of the *dipsas*), the fact that the poet's name is 'hidden' for the unattentive reader, corresponds to the fact that all other names are 'hidden' as well: by means of kennings (see Introduction 6.7) all characters are named with descriptions, Zeus as the 'revered blood of Cronus' (Κρόνου πρεσβίστατον αἷμα), Prometheus as the 'fire-stealer' (πυρὸς ληίστορ'), the ass as 'white-skin' (λεπάργῳ) or 'brayer' (βρωμήτορος), the snake as 'the trailing beast' (ἑρπετὰ ὁλκήρη) or 'the deadly brute' (οὐλομένη θήρ) and men by decriptive adj.'s as 'those who are vigorous' (αἰζηοῖσι), or 'the ephemerous ones' (ἡμερίοισι). In a context of hidden names, the hiding of one's own name is a particularly sophisticated addition; cf. Van Dijk 1997, 134–137. As a motif, hiding one's name is of course well-known from the *Odyssey*.

(vi) Although the insertion of an acrostic adds to the sophistication of a poem and fits well within the self-consciousness and the sharp awareness of form that dominate much of the extant Hellenistic poetry, the actual creation of one is hardly a matter of virtuosity. Its construction does not require a great amount of verbal dexterity, nor is it a sign of refinement in itself; cf. Cameron 1995, 37. This does not mean, however, that they defy literary interpretation. Although an acrostic may not be considered a poetic device per se, the inclusion within a significant passage of a poem can indeed add to the interpretation of such a passage. The fact that Aratus' and Nic.'s acrostics have been overlooked by the scholia does not diminish the poet's intention, *pace* Cameron; see Introduction 5.9.

(vii) An acrostic is per se a device that only plays a role within written texts. This does not automatically mean that Nic.'s poem could not have been part of any oral performance, but it does show that the *Theriaca* is a work that cannot be fully appreciated without being read. For the issues of audience and readership see Introduction 4.4.

(viii) It is probably no coincidence that Nic.'s attempt at attaining eternal fame—a topos among Greek poets—by safeguarding his name in his poem is found in a passage dealing with eternal life: whereas mankind loses its claim to eternal youth, the poet tries to secure his claim to enjoy lasting fame; see Clauss 2006, 171 and Sullivan 2013, 235.

The acrostic presented here, despite being a simple addition, can thus be considered a multifaceted and multifarious literary device that touches on tradi-

tion, functions as a marker, and fulfils its role between the named addressee, the *sphragis*, and the literal presence of Hesiod and Homer in the *Theriaca*.

345 **νειμάμενος κασίεσσιν:** 'having allotted to his brothers'. The Greek tradition is divided between Homer, who has Poseidon declare that the separate realms were divided by lot (*Il.* 15.189–191, cf. [Apollod.] 1.7 W. = 1.2.1 F.), and Hesiod, who describes how Zeus was chosen as lord and then took care of the allocation (*Th.* 881–885). Callimachus, who mainly follows Hesiod, dwells upon the issue in more detail in Call. *Jov.* 55–64, where it is said that the singers of old were wrong to speak of division by lot, as the separate realms of the world are not comparable and one must be out of his mind to agree to such a division.[9] In Nic.'s version, which seems to follow Hesiod and Callimachus' hymn it is Zeus who, after having gained dominion, assigns the different realms to his brother-gods.

The issue raised by Callimachus in *Jov.* 55–64 may be reflecting contemporary debate about the diverging origins of the division of the universe. Burkert (1992, 90–91; 2004, 35–37) points out that the division by lot as described by Homer is probably due to influences from near eastern myths of origination (in particular the Accadian epic of Atrahasis) and is therefore highly un-Greek, compared to the 'normal' Greek version in which Zeus comes into power after having dethroned his father Cronus, as told by Hesiod.

The addition of line 345 serves to underline how early the time period in which the story took place was, as Cronus had only just been dethroned and the realms of the world had only just been divided. As such it establishes a clear distinction between the present to which the teacher refers, and the dim and distant past.

**κασίεσσιν:** κάσις, restricted to poetry, is used for brother (here and in e.g. A. *Th.* 674, S. *OC* 1440) and sister (e.g. E. *Hec.* 361, Call. fr. 75.23 Harder) alike. It is a later hypocoristic form of κασιγνήτος (Chantraine 503); although it is unclear if the latter is a compound of κάσις and -γνήτος, it was apparently considered to be so in antiquity. Whether or not κάσις and κασιγνήτος are exact synonyms of ἀδελφός is unclear; κασιγνήτος does not point at uterine brothers, but in Homer it is used in a wider context of 'classes of relatives'; see Miller 1953, 46–47. The dat. as used by Nic. is a *hapax legomenon*. As usual, rare poetic variants are preferred.

9 This is, however, contradicted by Call. fr. 119 Harder, where it is clearly stated that lots were drawn and the different honorary lordships were divided (Μηκώνην ... | ἦχι πάλους ἐβάλοντο, διεκρίναντο δὲ τιμάς).

**346 ἰδμοσύνῃ:** 'wisdom', only found previously in Hes. *Th.* 377, in plur. According to West (1966, 270) used occasionally by post-Hellenistic hexameter poets, but apparently the instance in this line was overlooked as an instance in Hellenistic poetry; see also Magnelli 1999, 192–193 on Alexander Aetolus use of ἴδμονα (fr. 4.2). In *Th.* 377, Πέρσην θ', ὃ καὶ πᾶσι μετέπρεπεν ἰδμοσύνῃσιν, Hesiod does not explain why Perses (the father of Hecate, not to be confused with Hesiod's brother in the *Works and Days*) is particularly wise. Perhaps Nic. interpreted the Hesiodic word as 'divine wisdom' and therefore saw fit to apply it to Zeus. In Crin. *APl* 273.2 (*GPh* 2071) the word is applied to a god as well, indicating Asclepius' divine knowledge of the science of healing; Opp. *H.* 4.607, however, does not show such a connotation.

**νεότητα:** the gift bestowed upon men by Zeus is Youth. Whether or not this is to be interpreted as eternal life is unclear, although 356 suggests that the gift consisted merely of staying young during one's whole life, not enjoying an eternal youth literally without end. In Hes. *Op.* 109–116 the Golden Age (which is, however, under Cronus' rule) is described as an age in which dreadful old age is absent (οὐδέ τι δειλὸν | γῆρας ἐπῆν, 113–114), but people do die eventually (θνῆσκον δ' ὥσθ' ὕπνῳ δεδμημένοι, 116), albeit in the gentliest way imaginable. Hopkinson (1988, 144) mentions eternal youth in his comment on these lines, which implies eternal life and immortality.

Nic. does not explain how Youth is to be imagined, but the fact that it could be placed on the back of an ass suggests that it must have taken some kind of material form. Moreover, the burden carried by the ass is called a βρῖθος in 353, which suggest that the load was not a light one; see, however, 353–354 n. Although Nic. does not give any indication of the actual shape of Youth, it can tentatively be suggested that it took the shape of a herb, which has a parallel in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. On Tablet XI of the epic Ut-napishtim Gilgamesh tells of a plant-like coral with powers of rejuvenation, which can be found deep under the sea. Although Gilgamesh succeeds in obtaining the plant (which he calls 'Old Man Grown Young'), it is stolen later on by a snake, even before Gilgamesh has eaten of the plant, causing immortality to be lost again. As Frazer (1923, 18–19) points out, there is no mention of the snake eating the plant and thus becoming immortal itself, but this may be due to the defective state of the text. In any case, according to Frazer the consequence of the snake gaining immortality, for which he cites parallels, is not improbable; cf. Brelich 1958 and Reeve 1996–1997, 252. To assume that Nic. was familiar with the epic of Gilgamesh would be too bold a statement indeed, but it is not unlikely that he got the idea from similar folk stories originating in the Near East.

Concerning the shape of Youth Aelian (*NA* 6.51) is slightly more concrete and takes it to be a φάρμακον γήρως ἀμυντήριον (which could be a herb). But the presentation of immaterial concepts as goods is precedented in Hesiod's presentation of Hope in Pandora's box; see 353 n.

**ἡμερίοισι:** 'mortals' (for the use of ἡμέριος as a noun cf. E. *IA* 1331, ἁμερίων), but with specific emphasis on the brevity of human life. In a context of youth and old age the stress on the fact that man's life spans just a day (cf. Ar. *Av.* 687) seems poignant, despite the inaccuracy of the statement.[10] It is only when compared to the eternal life of the gods that man's life seems just as short as a day, yet in a story that starts with the primeval time of Cronus the contrast could hardly be put more sharply. As a noun ἡμέριος is higly poetic, and like the compound ἐφήμερος, it conveys the perspective of the gods looking down from Olympus to the mortals; cf. Dover (1968, 126–127) on the use of the compound in Ar. *Nu.* 223.

**347 πυρὸς ληίστορ':** 'the fire-stealer', an evident *antonomasia* of Prometheus, similar to Sophocles' πυρφόρος θεός | Τιτὰν Προμηθεύς (*OC* 55–56), but Nic. does not mention Prometheus by name at all. Although well-known from Aeschylus' tragedy, Prometheus' most prominent appearances in Greek poetry are found in both Hesiod's poems (*Op.* 47 ff., *Th.* 561 ff.). It can be suggested that the incorporation of Prometheus in the story was an invention of Nic. who thought of ways to attach the *aition* to the story of Prometheus' theft and hence to establish another connection between the *Theriaca* and the *Works and Days*. According to Aelian (*NA* 6.51), who mentions Nic.'s version, the story was treated by Sophocles, Dinolochus (the rival of Epicharmus), Ibycus, and the comic playwrights Aristias (fr. 8 *TrGF*, μῦθος περὶ ὄνου διψῶντος) and Apollophanes, but since none of these texts are extant it is impossible to decide whether they followed different versions of the same story, or whether Aelian had actually read them or merely knew they had existed. Aelian himself seems to have followed Nic.'s version (although he does not quote his name), but other sources seem to have been used in addition. The odd incorporation of Prometheus into the story is discussed by Davies (1987, 74–75), who tries to

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10 Fränkel (1946) argues that ἐφήμερ(ι)ος is not to be interpreted as 'living just one day', but rather 'living from day to day', focusing on the significance of the preposition in this compound. Although this interpretation does not necessarily conflict with the more straightforward interpretation of 'living just one day', there is no reason to assume that ἡμερίος and ἐφημερίος are to be considered full synonyms.

explain the element of fire by an anthropological comparison to similar stories; for a similar approach see Brelich 1958.

The portrayal of Prometheus as 'fire stealer' strikes us as particularly negative and in contrast to the usual positive idea of the Titan's son as a benefactor to mankind. In *Ther*. 348, however, we see an equally negative depiction of humans, mitigating Nic.'s description of Prometheus' here.

**ἔνιπτον:** the story of man betraying Prometheus is not found elsewhere, except in Aelian, who probably relied on Nic. As both the element of the betrayal and the subsequent reward by Zeus are not strictly necessary for the story—Zeus may have given Youth to man anyway, as Cronus did in the Golden Age (Hes. *Op*. 111–114)—these may be additions by Nic.

348 **ἄφρονες:** the emphatical placement at line-opening reminds one of the synonym νήπιοι, famous from *Od*. 1.8, but often used elsewhere too (e.g. *Od*. 4.371, 818, 6.301, 9.273, 11.449 etc.), and found in Hes. *Op*. 40 as well. Not only does it occupy the same *sedes*, but it is also a perfect metrical equivalent. Nic.'s choice for ἄφρων instead may be due to Hes. *Op*. 210 ἄφρων δ' ὅς κ' ἐθέλῃ πρὸς κρείσσονας ἀντιφερίζειν, which is part of the fable of the hawk and the nightingale. By using the same adj. in the same *sedes* Nic. shows that his incorporation of an aetiological fable is partly in imitation of his famous predecessor. Moreover, the idea conveyed in the Hesiodic fable ('do not contend with those that are stronger than you') is more or less applicable to Nic.'s story as well, viz. 'do not treat lightly what has been given to you by those stronger than you'; for further analysis of the relation between Hesiod's and Nicander's fables see Sullivan 2013.

**κακοφραδίῃς:** 'lack of attention', hence 'negligence'; for κακοφραδ- see Magnelli 2002, 32 with n. 108. In the only previous occurrence of the noun (*h.Cer*. 227, same *sedes*) 'negligence' fits better than 'foolishness' too, as is confirmed by e.g. the translations of Càssola (1975, 57) and West (2003b, 51). The point of the story is not to state that men are simply foolish, but rather that they have only themselves to blame, lacking care or respect, for their loss of the precious gift of Youth. In this way, Nic. seems to be varying on Homer's ἀτασθαλίῃσιν in *Od*. 1.7, which expresses the same idea. If Nic. has the opening of the *Odyssey* in mind here, the combined variation of νήπιοι and ἀτασθαλίῃσιν in *Od*. 1.7–8, seems to be reflected through the combination of ἄφρονες and κακοφραδίῃς in *Ther*. 348. But the idea of losing one's shot at immortality through one's own faulty behaviour is found in *h.Cer*. 256–262 too. There the goddess addresses Metaneira (who did not trust the goddess—in disguise—with her son Demophon) in similar

terms: νήϊδες, ἀφράδμονες (256), and ἀφραδίῃσι (258) point out Metaneira's foolhardiness, whereas ἀθάνατόν κέν τοι καὶ ἀγήραον ἤματα πάντα | παῖδα φίλον ποίησα (261–262), bring up the issue of eternal life. Interestingly the poet does use the story of Demeter and Metaneira, albeit for different purposes, in *Ther.* 483–487, on which see n. For the textual variant κακοφραδίῃς, as used by Gow and Spatafora, see Beazley 1954, 97–98.

**349 νωθεῖ:** as Hopkinson (1988, 145) points out, the sg. is to be preferred to the plur. νωθεῖς (Gow & Scholfield), because of probable imitation of *Il.* 11.558–559, where the sg. adj. is used for an ass (ὄνος). For Nic.'s interest in this Homeric passage see 285 n. In addition, Hopkinson objects that the plur. "gives a less elegant distribution of adjectives within the line"; the sg. yields another *hyperbaton*, on which see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8. Since the adj. applies to the ass, Gow & Scholfield's translation "sluggards" cannot be maintained. However, as the ass proves to be swift in the next line, Hopkinson suggest the secondary and rarer meaning 'stupid' (cf. A. *Pr.* 62) for νωθής.

**ἀμορβεύοντο λεπάργῳ:** as Hopkinson noticed (1988, 145), "a pointed imitation-cum-variation of a line from Callimachus, σύν δ' ἡμῖν ὁ πελαργὸς ἀμορβεύεσκεν ἀλοίτης, 'the revenging stork accompanied us' (fr. 76 H. = 271 Pf.)". The fragment is probably from the *Hecale*, but the defective state of the evidence makes it hard to decide if the imitation is merely word-play, or intended to shed more light on Nic.'s story of the ass. However, there may be a clue in the fact that storks were reputed to be birds with a strong sense of justice (references in Hollis 2009, 261), hence the avenging role (ἀλοίτης) in Callimachus' line. On an intertextual level Nic. may be reasoning as follows: the gift could never have been carried over to a stork, which is the personification of justice. The reader would instantly infer that the gift of Youth was in fact unjust, either because it was received by betrayal (the divulgement of Prometheus' theft), or because eternal youth is reserved for the gods. By turning the stork into an ass, Nic. hints at the outcome of the story: a gift carried by an ass will not last long.

**λεπάργῳ:** 'gleamy-skin', a kenning-type word (see Introduction 6.7), used here for an ass, possibly in imitation of Call. fr. 24.18 Harder, where the vocative is used for a bull or cow, or Theoc. 4.45, where it is used for a calf, although Gow may be right in suggesting that Λέπαργος is the name of the calf (1952b, 87), which was not uncommon if we are to believe the Suda (α 2090).

**350 δῶρα:** emphatically in enjambment, perhaps to stress the fact that Youth is a gift, not something that can be claimed or to which man is entitled by right.

Mankind was given one chance to indulge in the good life, but as they lost it through careless behaviour, they forfeited their divine boon. The plur. may be merely poetic, but δῶρα can have the pejorative undertone of gifts used as bribe (LSJ s.v. δῶρον I.2); Zeus' gift was after all not simply a present, but a reward for betraying Prometheus.

**πολύσκαρθμος:** cf. 139. In *Il.* 2.814 the epithet is used of the Amazone Myrine, 'jumping-far', hence 'moving in big steps', i.e. fast. The Homeric adj. aptly expresses the speed of the darting ass, which apparently can run as fast as a horse.

**κεκαυμένος αὐχένα δίψῃ:** according to Aelian (*NA* 6.51) the ass' thirst was caused by the summertime (εἶναι δὲ ὥραν θέρειον), something not told by Nic. Perhaps other sources mentioned it, but maybe Aelian felt the need to avoid the ellipses to make the story more plausible. Note the jingle of -καυ–/αὐχ–.

**351** It is surprising that Nic. does not mention the pool of water or the spring (as understood by Hopkinson 1988, 145 and Reeve 1996–1997, 246) at all, but goes straight on to describe the snake that apparently guards the spring and is consequently implored by the ass. It is equally surprising that the ass sees the snake lying in its den and not at the edge of the water, where we would expect him to be found, being the guardian of the spring. According to Reeve the story is "elliptical in a way often regarded as typical of Hellenistic narrative", which is pointed at by Hopkinson as well, though no references are given. In his way of presenting his narrative Nic. may have been influenced here by Hesiod, who has the same way of limiting his narrative to the main and exemplary point, leaving out other information; cf. *Op.* 48, where Hesiod does not elaborate on Prometheus' deception, *Op.* 94, where the removal of the lid of the jar of Pandora ends the story without further developments, or *Op.* 202–212, where the fable of the hawk and the nightingale ends in an unexpectedly abrupt way.

The lack of water in Nic.'s tale is nevertheless odd, as there is no obvious relation to a thirsty ass and a snake lying in its hole. Aelian, who seems to have borrowed the story from Nic. (but see 347 n.), apparently felt the need to fill in the gaps. In his version the ass arrives at a spring that is guarded by a snake. After an agreement has been made the ass and the snake exchange gifts: the ass gives Youth in exchange for a loving-cup (φιλοτησία), obviously filled with quenching water.

**γωλειοῖσι:** 'hole' or 'lair'; apparently a lexical variant of φωλεός, see 125 n. Although it is used for fish and molluscs as well, the noun itself does not sug-

gest it contains water; cf. the verb φωλεύω, used for hibernating bears, and for the lairs of foxes and mice as well.

352 **ἐλλιτάνευε:** at this point the story turns into an aetiological fable, as we have two animals speaking to each other and negotiating like humans. Although not remarkable in itself, the fact that a short fable is included in a didactic poem is reminiscent of the *Works and Days*, where the fable of the hawk and the nightingale forms a small digression to the main part of instructions. Van Dijk (1997, 137): "Fables occur only in didactic, not in heroic epic. This might be connected with the genre's didactic function". As our evidence of other didactic poetry is scant, it is hard to determine whether fables were used in other didactic poems as well. It seems, however, probable that Nic. recognised Hesiod's fable as a marked structural element of the *Works and Days*, and considered imitation a way of showing his intention to be read with the *Works and Days* in mind, or perhaps even awareness of the role of fables within the didactic genre itself.

**οὐλοόν:** a hyper-epic formation, apparently of Hellenistic origin, based on traditional epic forms as ὀλοός, οὖλος and οὐλόμενος; see Cuypers 1997, 122 and Campbell 1994, 328–329.

353–354 Another narratological ellipsis. Apparently the snake has agreed to give the imploring ass access to water, and now asks compensation in return, which is given.

353 **βρῖθος:** the nature or shape of the present of Youth is obviously irrelevant, yet βρῖθος suggests that it was at least of some weight. This does not, however, mean that the burden must have been literally very heavy, because apart from physical heaviness (as is suggested in E. *Tr.* 1050), βρῖθος can be used of any unspecified weight (cf. *Ther.* 102, 712), or metaphorically (cf. the verbal use in Pi. *N.* 3.40, βρίθει, 'carries great weight', 'is important'). A synonymous metaphor is used by Callimachus in fr. 1.35 Harder, where the poet complains that old age presses on him as a heavy burden (βάρος), just as Sicily does on the punished giant Enceladus, an image going back on Euripides' similar use of ἄχθος in *HF* 637 ff.; Hopkinson 1988, 97. But the presentation of abstract phenomena as objects is not unique, cf. Hope (ἐλπίς) contained in Pandora's jar (Hes. *Op.* 96.), or Beauty smeared (χρίεται) on Penelope by Athena (*Od.* 18.192–194); Reeve 1996–1997, 250.

**ἀνεδέξατο:** as Sullivan points out (2013, 242–243), the same form is used in *Al.* 273, being the penultimate line of the maimed acrostic. There it is used for the fennel stalk that 'received' the lump of fiery coal with which Prometheus commited his theft. Both *narthex* and ass have thus become 'tools' of transporting life-bringing power to man. The role of Prometheus is very different though: his betrayal of the gods (through his theft) has been matched by his betrayal by man.

354 **ἄφρονα:** cf. ἄφρονες in 348. Nic. does not seem to pass judgement: is it the unwise ass' fault, is man to blame in the first place for being careless, or are both equally blameworthy? Davies (1987, 70) considers the stupidity of the ass to be the cause of another aetiology: "the reason why men to this day treat the ass as a beast of burden to be weighed down and beaten with sticks is because of its original crime against mankind, which resulted in the loss of immortality". Davies points at comparable motifs in folk-literature where the ass is punished because of similar betrayals. But as Nic. has no use for the ass, other than displaying the aetiology/etymology of the *dipsas*, an additional aetiology is not given.

This is not the only Greek myth in which thirst, followed by wandering in search of a source to quench it, is the cause of misfortune. In Call. *Lav.Pall.* 77–78 we are told that Teiresias came to a fountain driven by unspeakable thirst, διψάσας δ' ἄφατόν τι ποτὶ ῥόον ἤλυθε κράνας | σχέτλιος; he too was unaware of the wrong he was about to do (οὐκ ἐθέλων, 78).

356 The poet's depiction of grievous old age enclosing man like a husk parallels the old skin that encloses the snake. But whereas the snake is able to slough its skin, man is captured by old age without the perspective of youth.

**κακόν … γῆρας:** referring to old age as being evil or hateful is a widely found topic, at least within poetry. It is called by many names, e.g. στυγερόν (*h.Ven.* 233, Stesich. S11.16–17 *PMGF*, Posidipp. *SH* 705.5 = 118 AB, A.R. 1.684, 4.872), οὐλόμενον (Hes. *Th.* 225, Theogn. 272, 768, 1011), ὀλοόν (Hes. *Th.* 604), δειλόν (Hes. *Op.* 113), ἀργαλέον (Theogn. 1132), χαλεπόν (*Il.* 8.103, 23.623, *Od.* 11.196), λυγρόν (*Od.* 24.249) etc. The combination κακὸν γῆρας is not found frequently (Theogn. 782, 1011 *IEG*$^2$, Sol. 24.10 *IEG*$^2$ = 18 Gentili-Prato). An interesting case is Call. fr. 1.33–35 Harder from the *Aetia*-prologue, where γῆρας and βάρος are combined in a context of shedding old age, as cicadas are believed to do—just like snakes. Both metrically and verbally this line-end, κακὸν περὶ γῆρας ὀπάζει, is close to Homer's χαλεπὸν δέ σε γῆρας ὀπάζει, found in *Il.* 8.103, said of Nestor. If Nic. is thinking of Homer here, his story is a marked reference to the proto-Homeric

age. Nestor, already very old, is said to be troubled by his γῆρας, but Nic.'s story goes back much further, to the very invention of γῆρας (cf. ἐξότε in 355). For the idea of thrusting off old age as a faculty not attainable for humans, cf. *h.Cer.* 276 (γῆρας ἀπωσαμένη), where the angered Demeter assumes her natural divine form again.

**γῆρας:** echoing γηραλέον in the previous line. Although Nic. shuns showy collocations of cognate roots (as e.g. Gorgias is wont to do), his use of the *figura etymologica* is quite frequent; see Introduction 6.6.

**ὀπάζει:** see 60 n.

357 **βρωμήτορος:** varying on the synonymous βρωμήεις (used substantivally in *Al.* 409 and 486) and βρωμητής (fr. 74.30 G-S from the *Georgica*). For the use of kennings in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.7.

**οὐλομένη θήρ:** in 353 the snake (ὁλκήρεα θῆρα in 351) was still masc. Here, as the aetiology of the snake's name is becoming relevant, Nic. switches to the fem., corresponding with διψάς, even if the animal is not mentioned again by name; cf. Hopkinson 1988, 146.

### *359–371 The* Chersydrus

After the aetiological story connected to the *dipsas*, seven more snakes are treated, to which the gecko is added. The next snake is the *chersydrus* (Levant viper, *Vipera lebetina*, Leitz § 24; other possibilities in Spatafora 2007a, 131) which looks just like the asp. No further information is therefore given about its exact appearance, or how to recognise it or tell it from the asp by its looks. Although the characteristic nature of the animal, being amphibious in the literal sense of the word—living both in water and on land—is not spelled out explicitly, the phrasing of 369 points at the etymology of the snake's name.

359 **νῦν δ' ἄγε:** repeated as line-opening in 528 and 636. According to Markovich (2007) the combination νῦν δ' ἄγε can be considered an example of the application of fictionalised speech, and as such typical of didactic poetry. According to his criteria utterances imitating factual live address are marked by (a) temporal cues stating the 'here and now', (b) verbs of saying, and (c) direct address. Here we have (a) and (c) in the combination νῦν δ' ἄγε; for fictionalisation of live speech as a criterion of didactic poetry see Introduction 4.2. According to Van Dijk (1997, 137) the fable "demarcates a caesura between two major groups in Nicander's elaborate discussion of various snakes (cf. the fresh

start in 359 νῦν δ' ἄγε), which is rounded off by another aetiological myth (484–487)". Plausible as this may seem, it is hard to see a clear division between two major groups: the treatment of the next seven snakes follows the same procedure, but the only aetiology to follow is found in 484–487, which does not form a proper parallel to the two aetiological stories in 309–319 and 343–358. The line-opening νῦν δ' ἄγε is therefore not to be interpreted as a fresh and significant start on a new level altogether, as Van Dijk suggests, but rather as a section marker (see Introduction 5.10) between equal sections that treat the next topic on the same level (viz. the next snake treated is in fact just like the asp, which was treated from 157 onwards). This is how the combination functions in 528 and 636, where it introduces the next description in a sequence, without shifting to a new level.

**χερσύδροιο:** a *hydrus* or watersnake (*Il.* 2.723, Hdt. 2.76, *Ther.* 414) that also lives on dry land (χέρσος). The etymology of the snake's name is hinted at in 369, on which see n.; cf. Introduction 6.6.

**εἴρεο:** this is the first time in the poem the addressee is asked to respond instead of listen, albeit formally, as the imperat. merely has a rhetorical function, serving to underline the vast knowledge the poet claims to possess. At the same time, the instruction to the addressee ('come and ask (me) now') shows the poet's engagement with his pupil. Even if this is just play, the pedantic eagerness displayed by the teacher shows just how well Nic. appreciates the role of didactics in his play, even if specific mention of it is not often made in the poem. Both Gow & Scholfield (1953, 53) and Touwaide (1997, 180) neglect the additional aspect of learning *by inquiry*, i.e. 'asking' in their translations. Jacques' "enquiers-toi" (2002, 29) is closer to the Greek, as the internal addressee is not asked to listen, but to make enquiries, preferably to the teacher. This type of interaction between pupil and teacher is well demonstrated in the first two books of Callimachus' *Aetia*, where the poetic persona acts as a pupil, posing questions to the Muses and asking them for answers, thus subverting the traditional roles of teacher and pupil within the genre of didactic poetry. For a different approach, denying the active stance of the pupil, see Schneider (1962, 12) who interprets the verb as a deponent expressing 'sich sagen lassen, hören'.

**362** **μυδόεν:** see 308 n.

**βρύχμα:** only here, cognate to the equally unique βρύγμα, and thus another example of Nic.'s pursuit for ultimate *variatio*. See 483 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**363** **φλιδόωσα:** 'bloated, ready to burst with moisture'. A rare verb (cf. *Al.* 557), expressing a particularly nasty and gross detail as it refers to the putrid soars (σηπεδόσι) caused by the *chersydrus*' bite. The *diectasis* of the part. follows the metrical practice of early epic.

**364** **πυρπολέοντα:** the use of this verb for a medical affliction, expressing a feeling of burning fire within the body caused by pain, is rare. Perhaps Nic. introduces the verb in this context finding new ways to describe heavy pain. This could be either part of his habit to describe physical afflictions in a way that effectively conveys horror, or may be induced by an interest in finding new ways of colourful poetic display, even of grim hardships such as festering wounds. This passage on the wound of the *chelydrus*' bite is extremely detailed, once again showing Nic. to have no inhibition in describing even the most horriful afflictions (see Introduction 8.2), while still paying habitual attention to lexical rarities such as μυσαχθής (361) and πιτναμένη (362), and the unusual part. φλιδόωσα (363) and πυρπολέοντα here.

**365** **πρηδόνες:** probably another lexical creation (πρήθω, 'swell'), found elsewhere only once (Aret. *CA* 1.1, second century CE). If Nic.'s point is to prove that any subject can be versified and turned into poetry as long as the poet is skilfull enough in manipulating his material, then his descriptions of wounds are his testimonies.

**ἐπημοιβοί:** in the same *sedes* in *Od.* 14.513 and Arat. 190, the latter being, according to Kidd (1997, 252–253), an imitation of Homer. The meaning ('alternating', 'in succession') is not exactly clear, but Kidd's explanation of a zig-zag pattern is perhaps not far from what Nic. means: vexing swellings occur one after another, in different places all around the body. As the two instances in Homer (*Il.* 12.456, *Od.* 14.513) have less in common with Nic.'s use and no other instances are known before Nic. an imitation of Aratus is not improbable.

**366** **τὸ πρίν:** early in the season, as opposed to later in the season when Sirius (368) rises and there is no mere left for the frogs.

**βροχθώδει:** 'shallow', probably a Nicandrean coinage, derived from βρόχθος, 'throat' or 'throatful', 'draught'; a poetic exaggeration.

**367** **ἄσπειστον … κότον:** the use of the adj. is quite odd in a context of the anger of a snake, considering the derivation from σπένδω, which is a particularly cultural way of appeasement. Treating the snake as if it is to be soothed by a

libation, even metaphorically, shows the snake as a human enemy with whom one can reason. For Nic. portraying snakes as possessing human qualities, instead of merely showing natural behaviour see 8 n. and Introduction 8.1; for the element of cultural intrusion into Nic.'s portrayal see Introduction 8.7.

**368 Σείριος αὐήνῃσι:** for the conflation of Sirius as a sign of the season of scorching heat (cf. Hes. *Op.* 582–588) and the sun which actually causes the heat cf. 205 n. Sirius rises in July; West 1978, 253.

**τρύγῃ δ' ἐν πυθμένι λίμνης:** not a reference to dryness itself (Gow & Scholfield); Jacques is probably right in assuming that it refers to the dry deposits ('dépots') on the bottom, which are visible after the scorching sun has dried up the pool. Such an interpretation is much closer to 'dregs' or 'lees', as deposits of wine.

**369 ἐν χέρσῳ:** although not stated explicitly, the poet's wording serves to point out the etymology of the watersnake's name, being a snake that not only lives in water (ὕδωρ) during the wet season, but on dry land (χέρσος) as well, in the season when the water has dried up in its regular habitat. For such etymological name-play in Nic. see O'Hara 1996, 40–41 and Introduction 6.6.

**370 βλοσυρόν:** see 336 n.

**371 γλώσσῃ ποιφύγδην:** for the coinage of the adv., only found here, see 21 n. This is the third (and last) reference to the fearsome display of a hissing snake showing its tongue; cf. 206 and 229 n.

**διψήρεας ὄγμους:** the scorching heat causes even the ruts next to the road to thirst for water; the adj., not found elsewhere, is coined for the occasion. Even the land is at its most vulnerable in hot summer, underlining the power of the snake in its territory.

### *372–383 The* Amphisbaena

After the *chersydrus* follows the *amphisbaena* (Turkish worm lizard, *Blanus strauchi*, or worm snake, *Typhlops vermicularis*, Leitz §1; see also Spatafora 2007a, 132), a creature thought to have heads at both ends of its body (ἀμφι-κάρηνον, 373) and as a consequence to be able to move both ways. The snake that is discussed here indeed looks like it has two heads because of its shape, having a blunt tail end; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 177 and Jacques 2002, 125. As a snake that really possesses two heads the animal is of course fictitious, and although we cannot be certain that Nic. considered it to be this way as well, the

first instance of the word in A. *Ag*. 1233, where an ἀμφίσβαινα is juxtaposed to Scylla as another odious creature, fit to scare children, gives us the impression the creature was never considered to be anything but mythical; cf. Fraenkel 1950, 659. Its appearance in the *Theriaca* seems to be due to Nic.'s uncritical stance with regard to his predecessors. It is likely that Nic. blindly follows his source here, and despite possible doubts about the animal's veracity he decided to include it nonetheless, aiming at completeness (and sensationalism) rather than accuracy. Moreover, the actual existence of a snake that *looks* like it has heads at both ends (see Leitz *l.c.*) may have confused stories about the existence of the *amphisbaena*, leaving people in doubt about its exact nature, real or fictitious. For the relation between the *Theriaca* and the paradoxographical tradition see Introduction 8.6.

372 **βραδύθουσαν:** 'moving sluggishly' (Gow 1951, 100); only here.

374 **ἀμβλὺ ... γένειον:** for the *hyperbaton* cf. 15 n. and Introduction 6.8.

376 **ῥωγαλέον:** only in Homer before Nic. The adj. is used elsewhere either for a tattered tunic (so in *Il.* 2.417, *Od.* 13.435, 14.343), or a ragged pouch, full of holes (*Od.* 13.438, 17.198, 18.109). Nic.'s use of the adj. for a snake's ragged skin reflects the idea that the skin is just a covering (like a tunic) that envelops a body, which is also evident in the sloughing of the snake's skin in 355.

377 **ὀροιτύποι:** see 5 n. and Introduction 8.2.

**οἷα ... | κόψαντες:** similes are not very frequent in the *Theriaca* and the simile used here serves to explain the procedure of cutting the snake's skin, rather than to add to the poetic value of the poem. The similarity between the cutting of an olive branch as a walking stick and the way woodcutters strip the skin of the snake is probably their way of slicing it in the length, somewhat like one would peel a cucumber with a knife. Although κόψαντες implies the chopping off of the branch from the tree, the verb also refers to the planing of the branch by removing strips of bark in the length; see Introduction 8.7.

**βατῆρα:** only here with the meaning of 'walking-stick'; normally something 'on which one treads', e.g. a treshold or pedestal. The regular form would be βακτηρία, but Herod. 8.60 (Ionic βατηρίῃ) shows that βατῆρ is close enough to be understood properly. According to Zanker (2009, 231) Herodas' βατηρίῃ is probably a rationalisation of the short α (βακτηρίῃι) in Hippon. 20 *IEG*$^{2}$ (8 Degani), which Herodas is imitating. Similar metrical considerations may

be relevant for Nic. too, who cannot use βακτῆρα in this *sedes*. A βακτηρία is commonly used as a walking stick or staff, unlike a ῥάβδος ('rod', wand') which is lighter.

**379 ἐσκύλευσαν:** a verb primarily used for stripping the spoils of a slain enemy (e.g. in Thucydides, rarely in Hellenistic poetry, Theoc. 24.5), although not used by Homer. The use of a verb from a military context adds to the depiction of the *amphisbaena* as a human enemy that can be conquered and for which no sympathy needs to be shown; see Introduction 8.8.

**380 βοῆς κόκκυγος ἐαρτέρου:** the singing of the cuckoo in spring as a marker of the time of year is primarily found in Hes. *Op*. 486, which Nic. may be imitating here. But whereas in Hes. the cuckoo's first song marks the beginning of a period, Nic. uses it reversely, instructing his pupil to act *before* the cuckoo's first song in spring.

**381 ἐν παλάμῃσιν:** ten times in the *Iliad*, always in a context of power, ability, or skill; of a carpenter (15.411), of a wheel in the hands of a potter, (18.600), of Hector's mighty, destructive hands (7.105, 24.738), of slaying by sword or spear (e.g. 5.558, 5.594, 8.111, 15.677). The only other instance before Nic. is A.R. 4.1055, where the Homeric image of men holding spears in their hands is repeated. Nic., however, seems to have applied the Homeric phrase to the very context of inability (ἀεργοί, 'weakening') and powerlessness, describing hands suffering from chilblains caused by the cold. The ordinary inconveniences of everyday life are far from the all but invulnerable Homeric heroes; yet it is the echo of epic diction that connects the two.

For the phenomenon of the transposition of elements from the realm of heroic epic to everyday life in Hellenistic poetry see Greene (2000, 15ff.) on Anyte (e.g. *AP* 5.48 = *HE* 700–703 = Geogh. 10), where the death of a puppy caused by a snakebite is depicted in grandiose diction as if it were a Homeric warrior, or Anyt. *AP* 7.202 (*HE* 704–707 = Geogh. 11), where the death of a cock is lamented in a similar vein.

**ἀεργοί:** 'debilitating', i.e. causing the sufferer to be ἀεργός. This use is not found elsewhere, as the adj. normally means 'lazy', 'idle'. It is typical of Nic.'s diction that neither use of the adj. in the *Theriaca* (cf. 634 n.) conforms to its common use.

**382 μάλκαι:** 'chilblains', a *concretum pro abstracto*, as the sg. expresses numbness (as caused by frost) in general; cf. 724. This concrete use makes the plur.

virtually a synonym of χίμετλα, on which see 682 n. According to Aelian (*NA* 8.8), invoking Nic. as his authority, the use of an *amphisbaena*'s slough, wrapped around a walking-stick, drives away snakes and other dangerous creatures as well. However, Aelian seems to have used both Apollodorus (i.e. Nic.'s source; see Introduction 2.3) and Nic. as his sources. As a consequence, he has mixed up his sources, ascribing to Nic. details not found in the *Theriaca*; see Scholfield 1959b, 189. From the scholia we learn that μάλκη, in this rare meaning of 'afflicted skin', was treated in Nic.'s work on rare words entitled Γλῶσσαι (fr. 143 Schneider); see Σ *Ther.* 382a.

383 **ἠδ' ὁπόταν:** this unusual combination, only found elsewhere in a fragment of Nic.'s predecessor Numenius (*SH* 582.2), is probably an imitation; see Klauser 1898, 5.

### *384–395 The* Scytale

After the *amphisbaena* the next snake is the *scytale* (west African sand boa, *Eryx jaculus*, Leitz § 1, 3; alternatives in Spatafora 2007a, 133), which is linked to the former through their similarity in appearance. The nature of these similarities remains, however, unclear, as Nic. proceeds with the differences between the *amphisbaena* and the *scytale*; the alleged two-headedness of the former does not seem to be shared by the latter. This passage contains another comparison (386) that borrows an element from human culture in order to express a natural element, followed by a kenning (388), some instances of variation (389–391), and the recapitulation of ideas already stated in the proem with regard to the origin of reptiles.

384 **δήεις:** see 100 n.

385 **οὐτιδανήν:** Gow & Scholfield's "useless" makes little sense, unless in direct opposition to snakes that have a particularly powerful tail, used for strangling or lashing. Here Nic. tells us that the *scytale* is bulky down to the end of its body, after which a negligibly tiny tail follows.

**σειρήν:** see 199 n.

386–387 **ὅσον σμινύοιο τέτυκται | στειλειῆς πάχετος:** for the thickness of a snake being expressed by comparing it with a tool, like a pronged hoe here, cf. 169–171, where the asp's thickness is said to be like that of a hunting-spear. The relation between the snake's appearance and Nic.'s description is of course evident from its name, which is normally used of any staff or club. The poet

refrains, however, from expressing the truism 'the *scytale* (i.e. snake) looks just like a *scytale* (i.e. staff)', and points at the latter through the similar στειλειή, 'haft'.

**σμινύοιο:** 'of a mattock'. The archaic gen. of this noun does not occur elsewhere, which makes it less probable that Nic. borrowed the word. For the application of archaic endings to create a pseudo-epic effect see Introduction 6.3.

**388 ἔντερα γῆς:** 'earth's entrails', a designation of earth-worms of the kenning-type, of which Greek has quite some examples; see Waern 1951, 44 and Introduction 6.7. Aratus is the only other poet who comes close to using the expression (ἔντερα γαίης, 959). Arist. *HA* 570a16 and Thphr. *Sign.* 42, however, rule out that the expression was an invention of an Alexandrian poet; see Kidd 1997, 506.

**αἶα:** the virtual juxtaposition of the synonyms γῆ and αἶα is already a feature of Homeric language (cf. *Od.* 11.301–302), and is imitated as a poetic peculiarity by Nic. who was also aware of the fact that αἶα is only used at line-end.

**389–390 οὐδ' ἄρ' … | βάλλῃ:** as opposed to other snakes, of which Nic. explained in 31–34 that they leave their dens at the start of spring to find fennel shoots to eat. In comparing the *scytale* to other snakes the elements treated in 31–34 have been rephrased to avoid repetition, which, unlike Homeric composition, was usually shunned by Hellenistic poets, for whom variation was of particular importance; see Introduction 6.10.

**389 ὅταν χαράδρεια λίπῃ καὶ ῥωγάδα πέτρην:** a variation of 31, ὅτε φωλεόν … φεύγων.

**390 ἦρος ἀεξομένου:** a variation of εἴαρι in 32. For *variatio* as a literary trademark of the poet see Introduction 6.10.

**ὁπόσ' ἑρπετὰ γαῖα φαείνῃ:** the image of the earth producing reptiles recalls the proem, in which Nic. explained reptiles' existence on earth by pointing at their origin from the Titans' blood; see 9 n.

**391 ἀκρεμόνος μαράθοιο χυτὸν περιβόσκεται ἔρνος:** a variation of μαράθου δὲ ἐνήχυτος ὄρπηξ | βοσκηθείς (33–34), with the corresponding pairs of χυτόν/νήχυτος, ἀκρεμόνος/ὄρπηξ, μαράθοιο/μαράθου and περιβόσκεται/βοσκηθείς.

**περιβόσκεται:** see 611 n.

392 εὖτ' ἂν ὑπ' ἠελίοιο περὶ φλόον ἑρπετὰ βάλλῃ: whereas in 31 the poet pays attention to the skin that has just been sloughed, in 392 the focus is on the new skin the *scytale* grows.

### *396–410 The King of Reptiles*

After a brief treatment of the *scytale*'s habits the *King of Reptiles* is presented, which, small as it may be, seems to be the more dangerous. The debate about whether the *King of Reptiles*, probably to be identified with the *basilisk*, is fictitious or not is particularly based on Pliny's fantastic descriptions of the animal; see also Spatafora 2007a, 134. The identification of the snake is treated by Barbara (2006), who points at the description of the *basilisk* by the Hellenistic author and researcher Bolus. It is striking that Bolus points at a conspicuous mark (a sort of diadem) on the head of the snake, which is not reported by Nic., even though we would expect such a significant means of identification to feature in his description. Barbara distinguishes two traditions in referring to the *King of Serpents*: it is the king of serpents (a) because it is feared by all other snakes, which is the tradition that follows from Nic.'s description or (b) because it wears a royal mark on its head, which is the tradition of Bolus. As Nic., being a poet, had other intentions than Bolus, we can expect different descriptions of the same *basilisk*. Differences like these, however, still convey the impression that Nic. never saw a *basilisk* himself—which seems to be true in the case of several other snakes as well; see Barbara 2006, 123. Even if Nic. had a different agenda, as Barbara suggests, we still would expect the mark to be mentioned, as identification is after all one the targets stated in the proem. Although the descriptions as given clearly point at a fictitious animal, at the core seems to be an animal known as the agama, a harmless lizard (Leitz § 36). For the relation between the *Theriaca* and the paradoxographical tradition see Introduction 8.6.

Aelian, who mentions the *basilisk* several times, associates the monster with Libya (*NA* 3.31), but his ludicrous suggestion that the *basilisk* (just like the lion) is terribly afraid of the cock, and can even die of the convulsions caused by listening to its shrill cries (cf. *NA* 5.50) is evidently not based on Nic.

397 ἑρπηστῶν βασιλῆα: the description 'king of creepers' is not found before Nic., who probably made up the phrasing, based on βασιλίσκος, the common designation of the creature which appears in Democr. fr. 300.7 DK, Erasistr. 278b col. 1, and Plb. 3.44.5. Although ἑρπηστῶν can also be connected to ἄλλων in the previous line, in which case its name would just be 'king' and as such a plausible synonym for the diminitive βασιλίσκος, the combination can also be viewed as a kenning, serving as a more lofty variant of the regular designation of the animal.

As a kenning, however, it would lack the necessary realistic component; cf. 142 n. and Introduction 6.7.

**398 ἐπὶ τρία δῶρα φέρων μῆκός τε καὶ ἰθύν:** a δῶρον ('hand's breadth', 'palm') equals 7,4 cm. The animal's small size is confirmed by Aelian (*NA* 2.5), but it is highly doubtful that Aelian did anything other than collecting information from earlier authors, including Nic.

**399 σπειραχθέα κνώδαλα γαίης:** a variation of ἄχθεα μυρία γαίης in 9, on which see n. The adj. σπειραχθέα is only found here.

**400 ἰυγήν:** the noun is used for all kinds of cries and howls, usually human (S. *Ph.* 752, Hdt. 9.43, Tim. 791.220 Hordern). Nic. seems to be the first to use it to denote the hissing of a snake, thus applying a word from the realm of human expression to an animal; Σ *Ther.* 400a (Eratosth. *CA* 19, p. 64), however, mentions the use of ἰυγή to indicate the barking of a dog. As Sistakou (2012, 220) points out, the statement that no monster abides the basilisk's hissing is "a variation on the widespread belief that the basilisk can kill upon casting its glance on any living being", as is found in e.g. Hld. 3.8.2.

**400–401 ὅτ' ἐς νομόν … | … μείρονται:** the activity described here, i.e. snakes going towards their different feeding-places, seems at odds with the biological observation that snakes usually do not show much activity during the hot hours of the day.

**401 ἀρδηθμοῖο:** 'watering-place'. The noun is only found once before the *Theriaca*, in Lyc. 622, but there it is used for the rain of Zeus nurturing the soil, which is not appropriate here. Nic. seems to have retained the lexical rarity, which may have been an invention of Lycophron himself, but uses it exactly like ἀρδμός, a Homeric *dis legomenon* (*Il.* 18.521, *Od.* 13.247), which was picked up by Apollonius in A.R. 4.1247, and which is used for watering-places.

**μεσημβρινόν:** this is the time of day when snakes are the most irritable and therefore the more poisonous; the same holds true for scorpions (Plin. *Nat.* 11.88), cf. Raschle 2001, 316–317. A. *Th.* 380–381 confirms that snakes hiss most violently at noontide. Nic. may have had additional reasons for choosing midday as the time when one should be particularly aware of the *basilisk*. Both in earlier and contemporary Greek poetry we find the topic of midday being a time of danger, often related to the apparition of gods; cf. Theoc. 1.15–18, Call. *Lav.Pall.* 72–73 (with Bulloch 1985a, 179), *Cer.* 38 (with Hopkinson 1984, 115),

Philostr. *Her.* 8.16, Ov. *Fast.* 4.762, *nec Faunum, medio cum premit arva die*, of Pan. Although gods do not play a part in this description, midday is still the time of day most strongly associated with danger.

**402 παλιντροπέες:** another case of Nic. adding a poetic touch by creating a new adj., using an unusual ending. The common adj. παλίντροπος is mainly used in tragedy (A. *Supp.* 173, *A.* 777, E. *HF* 1068, S. *Ph.* 1222), but Nic. may have been influenced by other Hellenistic poets (cf. Call. *Hec.* fr. 145 H. = 358 Pf., A.R. 3.1157, 4.165, 643).

**φύζῃ:** a distinctly epic noun (8× in Homer, *h.Merc.* 114), picked up by Lyc. (463) and A.R. (4.5); again in *Ther.* 825. The noun is particularly used for fleeing out of cowardice, or cowardly panic (*Il.* 9.2, 14.40, 15.62), which, in Nic.'s case, portrays the other snakes as cowards that do not dare to encounter the *basilisk*; cf. Ael. *NA* 2.5 and 2.7. The projection of human emotions (e.g. fear of the enemy) on the natural world of snakes, as well as the military context of battle, provided by the Homeric echoes, shows just how much the poet imbues his subjects with human qualities; see Introduction 8.1 and 8.8.

**403 ἐπρήσθη:** for the use of the aor. see 202 n.

**405–410** Lines 405–408 sum up different sorts and groups of animals that are all reluctant to approach the corpse of a victim of the bite of a *basilisk*: 'no one, no bird of prey, no eagle, vulture or raven, nor any wild animals'. In this way suspension is built up, which is resolved in 409–410 when the unfortunate fate is described of the exceptional animal that does eat from the poisoned body. In earlier texts describing scavengers and corpses the combination of birds and tetrapods is common. The *locus classicus* is of course *Il.* 1.4–5, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν | οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, phrased differently in *Od.* 3.259–260, ἀλλ᾽ ἄρα τόν γε κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατέδαψαν | κείμενον ἐν πεδίῳ, and 24.292, θηρσὶ καὶ οἰωνοῖσιν ἕλωρ γένετ'; cf. A. *Th.* 1014–1020, S. *Ant.* 205–206, 679–678, 1081–1082 (κύνες ... | ἢ θῆρες ἤ τις πτηνὸς οἰωνός), *Aj.* 830, Emp. frr. 21.11 and 130.2 DK, E. *El.* 896–897, and in later poetry e.g. [Phoc.] 185, μηδέ ... κυσὶν ῥίψῃι καὶ γυψὶν ἕλωρα. The combination is found in Th. 2.50 as well, the description of the pest in Athens, τὰ γὰρ ὄρνεα καὶ τετράποδα ὅσα ἀνθρώπων ἅπτεται, πολλῶν ἀτάφων γιγνομένων ἢ οὐ προσῄει ἢ γευσάμενα διεφθείρετο. Just like Thucydides Nic. mentions first the birds and then the other wild animals. Another interesting comparison is their common observation that in the case of bodies that died from disease neither birds nor beasts approach the corpse; only animals that are too ignorant to assess the situation taste from the polluted bodies, with death as result.

**οἰωνός:** in Homer only of large birds whose flight is relevant to augurs, as opposed to ὄρνιθες σμικραί (*Il.* 17.757), but Alexandrian poets use the noun for any bird; cf. McLennan 1977, 105; Volkmann 1854, 48.

**ἴχνια τείνας:** used metaphorically, as birds obviously do not leave tracks or footprints in flying over the body of a poisoned victim, unless Nic. means that the birds of prey do not land to sit on the body, which would be an unlikely use of ὑπέρ.

**406** **αἰγυπιοὶ γῦπές τε:** the first is an older word chiefly found in poetry, but both seem to be generic terms. It is nevertheless not improbable that Nic. had two different birds in mind; the use of synonyms is of course not uncommon in poetry (the *Theriaca* being a case in point), but it is hard to see why Nic., being known for his off-beat vocabulary, would insert a common word like γύψ if there is no real need for it.

**κόραξ τ' ὀμβρήρεα κρώζων:** although not a literal imitation, such a remark, concerning the connection between animal signs and weather conditions, is reminiscent of the *Diosemeia*, i.e. the second part of the *Phaenomena*. Aratus (963–968) treats three aspects of the connection between ravens and the coming of rain: (a) the appearance of screeching flocks of ravens as a sign of approaching rain, (b) the raven's cry, imitating raindrops (cf. Cazzaniga 1957a, 130), and (c) the way ravens croak twice in a low tone at the onset of rain. Cazzaniga may be right in assuming that Nic. is primarily thinking of the imitation of the sound of raindrops here, with ὀμβρήρεα as the object (neut. plur.). His parallel in Arat. 1002, κρώζῃ πολύφωνα (κορώνη), however, is not unproblematic; see Kidd (1997, 522), who takes πολύφωνα as an adj. Although the information given by Nic. here does not add to his account of snakes, it does help to read the *Theriaca* in the vein of a didactic poem like the *Phaenomena*. However, the connection between ravens and similar birds and the coming of rain may have been widespread knowledge; cf. Euph. *CA* 89, p. 4 (Σ *Ther.* 406c), ὑετόμαντις ὅτε κρώξειε κορώνη.

**408** **δαίνυνται:** Nic.'s description of different scavengers, all of them reluctant to approach the fetid prey, is an inverted echo of the Homeric ἀλλὰ κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατὰ πάντα δάσονται in *Il.* 22.354 (~ *Il.* 24.411 ~ *Od.* 3.259). Nic. has replaced κύνες with the more extensive 'any species of wild beast that pastures upon the hills' (407) and has explicited the οἰωνοί (405) with two kinds of vultures (but see 406 n.), in addition to the raven (406); Homer's δάσονται is turned into δαίνυνται. Whereas in Homer the image is used as a gloomy prospect of those still alive,

Nic. has turned the image into the observation of a natural phenomenon, underlining not the grim image of the scavengers, but the atrocious condition of the victim of a bite of the King of Snakes.

**409 βούβρωστις:** a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 24.532 (same *sedes*), the meaning of which is not beyond dispute. The word is used to describe that which drives the person whom Zeus gives his share from the urn of ills across the land, καί ἑ κακὴ βούβρωστις ἐπὶ χθόνα δῖαν ἐλαύνει. This driving force is interpreted by the scholiast as 'madness', but by others as 'poverty', 'misery' or 'starvation', which are all manifestions of the same plight; for the—disputed—literal meaning 'big' (prefix βού-) 'eating' (cf. βιβρώσκω, βρῶσις) see MacLeod 1982, 132 and Hopkinson 1984, 162 n. 1. Callimachus picked up the word to use it in *Cer.* 102 to describe ravenous appetite, which is either in Erysichthon's eyes, or of which Erysichthon is the personification himself; see Hopkinson 1984, 69 and 161–162. It is clear, however, that Callimachus used the word as meaning 'hunger' (λιμόν, 66), rather than 'greed' or 'gluttony'; cf. βούπεινα (Lyc. 581, Call. fr. 24.11 Harder = 26 Massimilla). Faraone (2012) brings in the existence of Boubrôstis as a female famine demon, worshipped in Smyrna, but such an interpretation, though apt for Callimachus, does not stand up here. The only other instance before Nic. (*Epica Adespota*, CA 4.20, pp. 78–79) is close to Homer, describing a woman that lives as a miserable rover: βούβρωστις has caused the loss of her sheep, which either means that 'misery' made her sell them, or, more probably, that 'starvation' caused her to eat them (πολλὰ δέ μοι μῆλ' ἔσκε, τὰ μὲν διὰ πάντα κέδασσεν | ἥδ' ὀλοὴ βούβρωστις, ἐγὼ δ' ἀκόμιστος ἀλῆτις). As the combination ὀλοὴ βούβρωστις is literally used by Nic., direct imitation is not unlikely; cf. Cusset 1999, 100. Hopkinson (1984, 161) surmises that the fragment is from the *Hecale*; both Hollis and Williams attribute it to Rhianus (see Spatafora 2006, 54, with references). It is hard to determine the exact meaning in *Ther.* 409 and Gow & Scholfield may be right in preferring 'greed' to 'starvation'.

**ἀϊδρείῃφι:** 'ignorance', a rare noun, more often used in the plur. The only occurrences in poetry before Nic. are *Od.* 10.231, 257, 11.272, 12.41, Hes. *Op.* 685, fr. 26.18 MW (17 Hirschberger) and A.R. 1.1283, but Hdt. 6.69 indicates that its use is not restricted to poetry. The ending in the archaic suffix -φι (denoting a dat. here), however, corroborates the epic dimension of the noun (cf. κρομμυόφι in 931, see n.). In the *Odyssey* the noun is used (three times in the same *sedes* as *Ther.* 409) for the kind of ignorance that prevents people from seeing great dangers ahead: Odysseus' comrades show ἀϊδρείῃ twice when lured by Circe, while elsewhere the noun is used for Epicaste, who married Oedipus in ignorance, and for the

man that is drawn to the Sirens in ignorance of the dangers involved. Not only are those that display ἀϊδρείῃ ignorant of the dangers ahead of them, but it is also an ignorance that (nearly) proves to be destructive (or at least is considered that way, cf. Hes. *Op.* 685). A.R. 1.1283, where the noun is used when the Argonauts have unwittingly left Heracles and Hylas behind, seems an exception to this combined concept of ignorance and (lethal) danger, but in the course of their journey the absence of Heracles repeatedly proves to be almost disastrous to the expedition of the Argonauts. Following Homer, Nic.'s choice thus shows his awareness of the epic dimension of the word, which is particularly apt for a grand and dramatic presentation of the scavenger that is about to die. Interestingly πολυϊδρείῃ, the equally rare antonym of ἀϊδρείῃ, proves to be equally dangerous in Call. fr. 75.8 Harder.

**θάνατός τε και ὠκέα μοῖρα τέτυκται:** perhaps a variation on *Il.* 3.101, ἡμέων δ' ὁπποτέρῳ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα τέτυκται, but the combination μοῖρα τέτυκται occurs at at line-end in *Il.* 18.120 and Hes. *Op.* 745 as well. At any rate, the use of τέτυκται at line-end is a trademark of epic style (31× in Homer, Hesiod and the *Homeric Hymns*, 25× in Apollonius). The *hendiadys* combination of θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα occurs ten times in Homer, but only in the *Iliad*.

### *411–437* *The* Dryinas

Following the description of the *basilisk* is the *dryinas* (crossed viper, *Vipera berus*, Leitz § 27; other possibilities in Spatafora 2007a, 135), literally 'oak-snake', because of its habit to live in oaks (cf. 412), also known as the *chelydrus*. Although the passage ends with the horrible condition in which the victim of the *dryinas*' bite finds himself, the first part shows that the snake is not matchless at all, as it is subject to attacks of the gadfly, a creature thus avoided by the *dryinas*. This is one of the infrequent occasions in the *Theriaca* where Nic. elaborates on the natural enemies of snakes themselves, for which the battles between the ichneumon and the asp (190–208) and the eagle and the dragon (448–457) are parallels. The description of the snake itself (420 ff.) is enriched by a simile, in which the disgusting smell exhaled by the snake's skin is compared to the result of a tanner's labour, i.e. fresh leather oozing a loathsome odour. Subsequently another remark is made concerning the smell of the wound caused by the *dryinas*' bite, which encloses the tanner's simile between two remarks concerning the snake and its bite; see also Introduction 8.7.

**411** **κῆρα:** emphatically at the opening of the next section, which is again largely dedicated to extreme suffering. The use of κήρ at the beginning of the line may be due to association after θάνατος and μοῖρα in the previous line.

**πιφαύσκεο:** yet another synonym for 'learn' in the first line of a new section; see Introduction 5.10. According to Σ *Ther.* 411d to be understood as ἄκουε δή, explained by Schneider (1962, 12) as a deponential "sich sagen lassen"; cf. εἴρεο 359 n. For the techniques employed by the poet to achieve maximum variety of address see Introduction 6.10.

**χέλυδρον:** treated by Nic. in 359–371.

412 **ἐξέτεροι:** an adj. only found in the *Theriaca*, here, in 588 and in 744. Apparently synonymous to ἕτεροι, in which case the compound may be nothing more than an affected coinage. Sometimes, however, the use of ἐκ- in compounds expresses completion (e.g. ἔκπικρος, 'very bitter'). If such use is intended by Nic. 'others altogether' may be a better translation.

**ἐν δρυσὶν οἰκία τεύξας:** underlining the etymology of the snake's name. For such etymological puns see O'Hara 1996, 40–41 and Introduction 6.6.

413 **ὀρεσκεύει:** 'lives on/in mountains'; only here. Perhaps it is based on the rare ὀρεσκῷος (epic, lyric)/ὀρεσκόος (tragic), usually associated with wild animals (including a tortoise and a hare in the *Homeric Hymns*); see Pulleyn 2000, 199 and Lupas 1981, 174.

415 **ὅ τε βρύα προλιπὼν καὶ ἕλος:** inspired by A.R. 1.1266, πίσεά τε προλιπὼν καὶ ἑλεσπίδας. Apollonius describes a bull, rushing frenzied from meadows and marshes because it is stung by a gadfly. Nic. has adopted the same image, replacing the bull with the *dryinas*: but whereas the bull runs through the fields driven by the pain caused by the gadfly, the *dryinas* goes through marshes and lakes hurrying to catch some food before it gets stung (417).

416 **ἀγρώσσων:** used here for animals hunting other animals, as in *Od.* 5.53, where a cormorant hunts for fish. As usual Nic. prefers the rarer variant (cf. the common ἀγρεύω), ἀγρώσσων being a Homeric *hapax legomenon*. As such it was popular with Hellenistic poets, cf. Lyc. 499, 600, Euph. *CA* 58.3, p. 41, Call. *Ap.* 60, and the many instances in Opp. *H.* and [Opp.] *C.* As Williams (1978, 59) points out the alleged distinction between ἄγρη (hunting for birds or fish) and θήρη (hunting for big game) does not stand up.

417 **μύωπος ... ὁρμήν:** see 415 n. The image of a bull or cow bitten by a gadfly or horsefly is not uncommon, cf. A. *Supp.* 307–310, Call. *Hec.* fr. 117 H. (301 Pf.), A.R. 1.1266 and 3.276–277. The sting is often used metaphorically, in similes,

of the sting of Eros, which causes frenzy in the victim; see Campbell 1994, 246. Nic., however, returns to the literal use of the image, but with Apollonius' simile in mind and with the bull replaced by the *dryinas*. Philumenus (*Ven.* 25.1) expounds the danger of the gadfly to the snake: ἐν δὲ ταύταις ταῖς φολίσιν ἐμφωλεύειν φασὶν μυίας τὰς χαλκοπτέρους, αὗται δὲ ἀναιροῦσιν τοὺς ὄφεις.

**ἀήθεα:** literally 'unusual', as conveyed by Jacques and Spatafora, but there can be little unusual about a recurrent natural phenomenon. Perhaps the idea is that it is unusual for the mighty snake to have so puny an enemy, rather than the enmity between the snake and the gadfly itself being unexpected. Gow & Scholfield's 'distasteful' makes better sense: the gadfly finds a place between the coarse scales of the snake (Philum. *Ven.* 25.1) before attacking. This way the snake cannot defend itself.

**418 πρέμνον κοίλης ὑπεδύσατο φηγοῦ:** the short excursus of the *dryinas*' fear of the gadfly somewhat resembles the two other enmities treated in the *Theriaca*, i.e. the battle between the ichneumon and the asp (190–208), and that between the dragon and the eagle (448–457). But whereas these battles are described in an epic vein, resembling an Iliadic battle (see Introduction 8.8), the *dryinas*' fear of the gadfly and its swift escape into a hollow tree is comical in comparison; see Introduction 8.4. According to Philumenus the *dryinas* does no escape into the hollow of the oak, but between the trees' roots, ἐμφωλεύουσι δὲ ἐν ταῖς τῶν δρυῶν ῥίζαις, ὅθεν καὶ δρυίναι λέγονται (*Ven.* 25.1).

**420 ἀρπεδές:** only here. According to Matthews (1996, 92–94) Nic. probably derived the adj. from ἀρπεδόεσσα, which is a *hapax legomenon* in Antim. fr. 5 Matthews (Wyss). Cf. πεδόεσσα in 662, which appears to be another Nicandrean derivation from Antimachus' coinage.

**421 ὕδρῳ:** probably the same snake as the χέρσυδρος, but cf. Leitz 1997, 17. Interestingly the most famous watersnake is not a ὕδρος, but a ὕδρα, viz. the Lernaean hydra.

**το δ' … ἐχθρὸν ἄηται:** occasionally ἄημι is used for a body that 'breathes' a certain scent or emanates a certain feel, instead of literally referring to the breath from a mouth (*LfgrE* B II.2 s.v. ἄημι, 'weggeweht worden', 'ausstrahlen'). Cf. [Hes.] *Sc.* 7–8, τῆς καὶ ἀπὸ κρῆθεν βλεφάρων τ' ἄπο κυανεάων | τοῖον ἄηθ' οἷόν τε πολυχρύσου Ἀφροδίτης, [Hes.] fr. 43a.74 MW (37 Hirschberger), ]θεου χαρίεν τ' ἀπὸ εἶδος ἄητο, and *h.Cer.* 276, περί τ' ἀμφί τε κάλλος ἄητο. But whereas in these examples we find women producing a divine radiation, Nic. uses the odd construction for the

loathsome stench emanated by the snake's body, combining epic grandeur with an ordinary biological phenomenon. The snake's putrid stench is confirmed by Philumenus (probably based, however, on Nic.), who tells us this snake smells so bad you do not need to see it to sense its presence, εἰσὶ δὲ δυσώδεις, διὸ καὶ μὴ ὁρώμενοι γνωρίζονται, ἔνθα εἰσίν (*Ven.* 25.1).

**ἀπὸ χροός:** cf. the lexical variant χρωτός in 425. For the difference between χρώς and χροιή in the *Theriaca* see 428 n.

**422–423** Another simile, in which the smell oozed by the *chelydrus*' skin is compared to that of horse-skins that have just been tanned. This is one of many instances in the *Theriaca* where the poet brings the natural world of snakes together with the cultural world of humans. For the element of nature-culture, either in opposition or interwoven see Introduction 8.2 and 8.7.

**423** **γναπτόμενοι … λάθαργοι:** the description is of a quite technical nature, using the rare ἄρβηλος, a semicircular leather-worker's knife (Σ *Ther.* 423a), and the *hapax legomenon* λάθαργοι, 'bits of leather', a technical term of unclear origin. For the implicit image of craftsmen, who make a frequent appearance in the *Theriaca*, see Introduction 8.7.

**424** **κώληπι:** either 'hollow of the knee' or 'heel'. The noun is a *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 23.726, κόψ' ὄπιθεν κώληπα τυχών (same *sedes*), of Odysseus who wounds Ajax in the hollow of the knee in battle; cf. Σ D ad *Il.* 23.726 van Thiel, ἔκρουσεν αὐτῷ, φησὶν, ἐπιτυχὼν ὄπιθεν τὴν ἰγνύην. The only other instances are Nonn. *D.* 10.354, 368 and 37.581. Gow & Scholfield, following Schneider, have the plur. κώληπας, which does not make sense, as it is improbable that a snake would strike in two hollows (or two heels) at the same time. Jacques suggests κώληπι, based on comparison with the syntax of 393 and with Nonnus, where the word refers not to the hollow of the knee, but to a part of the foot; see Jacques 2002, 35. It is hard to determine if Nonnus applied the new meaning to the word or Nic., although in the context of a snake's assault 'heel' makes good sense; in either case, the sg. is best. For a victim bitten in the foot rather than the hollow of the knee cf. Verg. *G.* 4.457–459 and Ov. *Met.* 10.1.10, *occidit in talum serpentis dente recepto*, of Eurydice.

**425** **χρωτός:** this regular Attic gen. is highly unusual in epic, *Il.* 10.575 and Emp. fr. 76.11 DK being the only other instances; cf. χροός in e.g. *Ther.* 241, 304, 421, 929. For the relation between χρώς and χροιή see 428 n. Perhaps Nic. wanted to achieve double variation on ἀπὸ χροός in the similar verse 421, by placing

ἀπό postpositively (see Introduction 6.8) and using an alternative ending, thus avoiding repetition of a phrase after only a few lines; for such variation in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.10.

**426 κορθύεται:** a rare verb, which Nic. may have borrowed from A.R. 2.322, πολλὸν ἁλὸς κορθύεται ὕδωρ, where the verb occupies the same *sedes*. Apollonius uses the verb to describe the huge mass of seawater heaping up in a crest as a result of the clashing of the Dark Rocks. If Nic. had this verse in mind, his description of the dark swelling caused by the bite may be compared to the water pushed up forcefully by the rocks; the analogy lies in the fast occurrence of the swelling as the venom is thrusted. Moreover, the image of the Dark Rocks is one of lethal danger and one of a blowup of epic proportions.

**427 πεδόωσιν:** the verb vividly expresses the powerlessness of the victim of the *dryinas*' bite, as his mind is 'fettered' by pangs of agony. The verb πεδάω, here showing epic *diectasis*, is often used metaphorically of being bound by an ineluctable force, cf. *Od.* 4.380, 469, 23.353.

**428 χροιῇ:** 'body'. Semantically the use of χροιά/χροιή and χρώς is often blurred in Greek, as both can express skin, body, colour of the skin, and colour in general. Nic.'s use is fairly, but not completely, consistent: whereas χρώς always refers to the skin, χροιή is generally used for colour. Exceptions to the latter occasionally occur, as in this line, where χροιή means 'body', and 262, where χροιή seems to mean 'skin' (although 'body' is arguably correct as well).

**430 νεμέθων:** 'devouring', a rare epic synonym of νέμω (LSV s.v. νέμω B). The verb is a *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 11.635, where it is used of two feeding doves, depicted on a decorated cup. As there is no evident relation to the context Nic. was perhaps inspired by a different source, or imitated the word simply for its rarity.

**ἐπιβόσκεται:** in Nic.'s presentation it is the poison, not the snake, that is said to feed upon the skin or the body of the victim. The verb itself lacks the negative connotation of destruction implied here; cf. the rustic image of the thyme feeding on the moist soil in 67. The simple is usually associated with cattle (cf. *Od.* 14.102, 21.49, *h.Merc.* 232).

**ἀχλύς:** used as in Homer, as a mist over the eyes (cf. Apollon. *Lex.* 49.19, ἡ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν σκότωσις), not as the later metaphor for night (cf. A.R. 2.1103), or physical mist, be it on earth (A.R. 4.1361) or in the sky (Arat. 432).

431 **ὄσσε:** for the use of the dual see 231 n. and Introduction 6.3.

**κακοσταθέοντα:** ostensibly a Nicandrean coinage, used here for the victim, who is 'in a sorry plight', but earlier in the poem of adverse winds; see 269 n. Perhaps the use in this line should be considered metaphorical, as the adversity of both a victim of a snakebite and that of a gale (if the verb is interpreted passively) are similar in some ways. Both are overcome by a force of nature, both can do little to save themselves, death is imminent for both, but the outcome still insecure.

432 **μηκάζουσι:** only here, apparently as a poetic variant of μηκάομαι, although the formation from μηκάς may have existed already. μηκάομαι is an onomatopoeic word used for different kinds of animal sounds, like the bleating of sheep or the screaming of a doe or a hare (*Il.* 10.362). To use the verb for humans shows how degrading the *dryinas*' bite is, when victims can utter merely beastly sounds as they have lost control of their faculties, which already started with the loss of vision in 430–431. The use of the verb here, viz. portraying humans as animals, thus complements the opposite image of animals portrayed as humans, found throughout the poem. For the inversal of roles of humans and animals, as portrayed by the poet, see Introduction 8.1.

433 **οὖρα δ' ἀπέστυπται:** 'the urine is stopped'. The similarity with Hp. *Int.* 14, καὶ στύφει κατ' ὀλίγον τὸ οὖρον, may point at a technical use of the verb in combination with this noun. For Nic.'s occasional use of diction borrowed from medical-technical sources see De Stefani 2006a.

434–435 **ῥέγκουσιν ... | ... δειρῆς:** a rare instance of two *versus tetracoli* separated by ἤ in 435; see also Introduction 6.8. Such four-word lines are frequent in this passage, cf. 431, 442.

**λυγμοῖσι ... θαμέεσσιν:** 'with frequent retchings'. λυγμός is all but restricted to medical prose (the Hippocratic corpus, Aristoteles), which is probable where Nic. borrowed the word from. Whereas the noun gives Nic.'s information quite a clinical touch, the adj. is predominantly found in poetry, creating a sophisticated combination of scientific and poetic diction to express the abhorrent affliction of the snake's bite.

436 **ἄλλοτε:** summing up alternative possibilities or appearances and thus confirming the wide knowledge of the teacher seems to be a typical feature of didactic poetry (e.g. Hes. *Op.* 552, 822–823, 825, Arat. 425–426, 767–768, 779–780, 978–979, 1106). Showing one's awareness of the variety of possibilities

adds to an image of someone who knows his facts from experience, even though this may be just pretence.

437 **κατεχεύατο:** in 176 the verb is used for the dirt literally poured into the sea from the Nile, but here and in 466 the image of an affliction being poured out over the victim's body is used metaphorically, just like it is occasionally applied in Homer, cf. *Il.* 2.670 (πλοῦτον), *Od.* 2.12, 8.19, 17.63, 23.162 (χάριν). As usual (see notes on 257, 431, 447, 467–468, 725–728, 776) we are neither informed about the outcome of the victim's affliction, nor is the detached poet concerned with commiseration.

### *438–447 The Dragon*

The next snake treated is the dragon (four-lined snake, *Elaphe quatuorlineata*, Leitz § 6; alternatives in Spatafora 2007a, 136–137). As the word δράκων was used from Homer on to indicate snakes (e.g. A. *Th.* 381) or snakelike monsters (e.g. *Od.* 4.457) in general, it is hard to determine whether a particular species known as *dragon* really existed; arguments are discussed in Jacques 2002, 135–137. The dragon described here, sporting three rows of teeth, does not inspire much faith in its actual existance, *pace* Leitz.

This passage contains an instance of Nic.'s occupation with the motif of the *primus inventor*, here expressed very succinctly in 439–440, yet showing typical elements, e.g. a relative clause opening the aetiology (ὅν, 439), the use of ποτε (439) to place the story in an indistinct (because mythical) past, the mention of the 'inventor' himself (Παιήων, 439), and some details concerning the context or place of the relation between the 'invention' and the 'inventor' (440). Despite the fact that the essential element, viz. the proper invention, is lacking here—probably due to Nic.'s highly elliptic style—the similarity to other πρῶτος εὑρετής-digressions is striking; see Introduction 8.3.

438 **κύανόν τε δράκοντα:** in *Il.* 11.25 κυάνεοι δράκοντες decorate the breastplate of Agamemnon. Later on a writhing κυάνεος δράκων decorates the shoulder strap of the shield. Homer adds to latter decription: κεφαλαὶ δέ οἱ ἦσαν | τρεῖς ἀμφιστρεφέες, ἑνὸς αὐχένος ἐκπεφυυῖαι (39–40). Whereas the existance of three-headed snakes is of course fantastic, the word δράκων probably just meant 'snake' to Homer. For the distinction between this dragon and the sea-snake, also called δράκων, cf. 828 n.

**κύανον:** used only here as the adj. κυάνεος. As a noun *cyanus* is a kind of dark blue glass, used as a less expensive imitation of lapis lazuli. The adj. κυάνεος originally must have meant 'made of *cyanus*', but already in Homer the adj. simply

means 'dark', either dark-blue or black; for discussion of the colour and the use of the adj. for the eyebrows of Zeus (*Il.* 1.528, 15.102), which are more likely to be called black than blue, see Pulleyn 2000, 255–256. Since Homer the adj. seems to have become a fixed epithet of the dragon, rather than an informative description of its colour, cf. [Hes.] *Sc.* 166–167, A. *Pers.* 81, Theoc. 24.14 and (although loosely connected) Euph. *CA* 51.7, p. 40 (57 Van Groningen). Nic. may therefore be using the adj. not to describe the colour, for which he uses the adj. χλοάοντα, but to follow the tradition of κυάνεος as a fixed epithet. His imitation is, however, not literal, as he has changed the ending -εος in -ος. Anacreont. 17.10–11, has στεφέτω μέτωπον ὀφρῦς κυανωτέρη δρακόντων, which, again, indicates that the adj. came to be used to indicate darkness rather than colour.

**439** **ὅν ποτε:** relative phrases opening with the pronoun followed by ποτε are quite common in Greek. The combination is more or less formulaic as a way of opening a story of the background of the antecedent, as in ἦν ποτε Χείρων in 501, where the same phrase is used to open a similar background story. In this way the adv. ποτε functions as a narrative marker of usually short digressions. Cf. Pfeijffer (1999a, 113), who signals the same use of ποτε in Pindar: "ποτε serves as a signal to the audience that a shift is made from the present occasion to the past" (commenting on *N.* 5.9) or "a shift to the mythical past" in particular (1999a, 527), commenting on *P.* 8.39. Cf. *Il.* 4.474, *Od.* 3.84, 8.448, 19.522, Hes. *Th.* 22 (αἵ νύ ποθ'), [Hes.] fr. 161.2 MW (*15 Hirschberger), Pi. *O.* 3.13, 7.34, 9.9, *P.* 1.16, 4.20, 107, 152, 9.15, 12.6, A.R. 2.2, Call. *Dian.* 190, *Del.* 308 etc.; cf. West 1966, 161.

Bühler (1960, 47–48) and Campbell (1991, 26) point at this use of ποτε to open miniature epics (cf. *Batr.* 9, Mosch. *Eur.* 1, and Cat. 64.1, *Peliaco quondam*). In didactic poems such epic stories are of course not treated in full, yet the use of ποτε in the *Theriaca* points at a similar approach, with ποτε as an introductory marker of mythical narrative.

**Παιήων:** a cult title of Apollo (sometimes of other gods, e.g. Asclepius in Ar. *Pl.* 636), but as is clear from Hes. fr. 307 MW, Apollo and Paieon were sometimes considered to be separate entities, εἰ μὴ Ἀπόλλων Φοῖβος ὑπὲκ θανάτοιο σαώσαι | ἢ αὐτὸς Παιήων, ὃς ἁπάντων φάρμακα οἶδεν. Paieon makes his appearance occasionally in Homer (*Il.* 5.401, 899–900, *Od.* 4.232) as the healer of the gods, separate from Apollo. Kirk: "He is associated with, buth usually distinguished from, Apollo" (1990, 153). According to Edelstein (1945, 56–57) Paieon was gradually replaced by Apollo or identified with him, but a separate development can be traced in the Παιήονος ... γενέθλη (*Od.* 4.232), 'offspring of Paieon' (i.e. physicians), who gradually came to consider Asclepius as their patron, not Paieon.

According to Jacques the Paieon featuring in Homer is to be distinguished from the one mentioned by Nic., but such a distinction is not evident. No particular story is known of Paieon (or even Apollo) raising a snake in an oak, although a more general association between the god of healing and the snake must have existed from early on. At least in later times Paieon was indentified with Asclepius, who had a snake as attribute; Jacques 2002, 137. Nic.'s choice for the rare Paieon may be based on the story of the snake raised in an oak connected to him (if such a story was ever current), but it cannot be excluded that Nic. mixed up the different gods of healing in order to present the rare antiquarian name of Paieon. We do, however, get the feeling that Nic. is pointing at a famous story told elsewhere (perhaps in one of his own works), which is merely brought to memory here.

An interesting comparison can be made with A.R. 4.1511: the Argonaut Mopsus is bitten by a snake (ὄφις) in the desert, whereupon the narrator tells us that once bitten "the length of their [viz. the victims'] path to Hades is not even a cubit, not even if Paieon … should administer drugs, when once its fangs have sunk in" (4.1508–1512, transl. Hunter). The passage clearly states that when it comes to curing snakebites, even Paieon needs to admit his lack of capability to provide a cure. If Nic. had this passage in mind, it would be implausible to stage Paieon as a healer in the *Theriaca*, and the fact that the god of healing is presented here as one who once nursed a snake, instead of one who nurses their opponents, is odd. In 686, however, Nic. presents Paieon as a healer after all, proving Apollonius wrong.

**φηγῷ:** the association between oaks and snakes is already mentioned in 413 and 418. Although this may be coincidental, the snake (indicated as δράκων in A.R. 2.405 and as ὄφις in 4.128) guarding the Golden Fleece in the *Argonautica* is also sitting on an oak. Perhaps the short digression on Paieon serves to explain the primeval connection between snakes and oaks: one of the first snakes was fostered in an oak and ever since oaks have served as a shelter for them. If this is Nic.'s intention, then the digression could be regarded as another aetiology; see Introduction 8.3. For the oak as a place to hide in cf. *Cypr.* fr. 15 *PEG* (13 *EGF*) and Pi. *N.* 10.62, in which the story is told of how Castor and/or Pollux were seen by Lynceus, hiding in an oak.

**440 Πηλίῳ ἐν νιφόεντι:** although the adj. is often employed to indicate snow-clad mountains (Olympus and Parnassus in particular), Nic. is the first to use it for the Pelion, which is otherwise given the epithets εἰνοσίφυλλον (*Il.* 2.757, *Od.* 11.316), ὑλήεις (Hes. fr. 40.2 MW = 28 Hirschberger, fr. 204.87 MW = 11 Hirschberger) and αἰπύ (Hes. fr. 209.4 MW = 97 Hirschberger). It is odd that Nic.

should call a particular mountain snowy (both here and in 502), while others never seem to use such a designation, but νιφόεντι may well be used as a general epithet for mountains; see 145 n. There is some reason to follow the suggestion of Cazzaniga (1973, 54–55) to read δρυόεντι, although his main objection is the un-Nicandrean repetition of the combination in 502, not the uncommon designation of the Pelion. From Pindar (*P.* 3.4–6) we learn that it was Mount Pelion in Thessaly where Cheiron instructed Asclepius in the art of medicine.

**Πελεθρόνιον:** a valley of the Pelion connected with the Lapiths (cf. Verg. *G.* 3.115, *Pelethronii Lapithae*) and the Centaurs (cf. Luc. 6.387, with *Peletroniis … antris* as the Centaurs' home); see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 179 and Thomas 1988b, 60–61. This is the valley where Cheiron grew up. There may be an element of learned Hellenistic topography here, something that is usually associated with Callimachus and Apollonius, who are particularly known for showing off their knowledge of remote places. For Nic.'s use of learned topography see Introduction 8.5.

441 **ἄγλαυρος:** see 62 n.

442 **τρίστοιχοι … ὀδόντες:** probably in imitation of Homer's description of the heads of Scylla in *Od.* 12.91 (which has τρίστοιχοι ὀδόντες at line-end), but Nic. has separated the noun and the adj. to produce a *hyperbaton*; see Introduction 6.8. Before Nic. the Homeric *hapax legomenon* is used by Ctesias to describe the Indian manticore, which is more likely to be a tiger than an actual monster with three rows of teeth, and by Hermesianax (*CA* 7.12, p. 98 = 3 Lightfoot), indicating Cerberus' triple heads.

442 **περιστιχόωσιν:** in Homer the simple verb means 'to advance', 'to march out in companies' when used for soldiers (e.g. *Il.* 2.92), but *Il.* 2.516, 602 et al. make clear that the verb is used for objects (e.g. ranging ships), lying in rows, as well. The act. is post-Homeric and is employed by other Hellenistic poets as well (A.R. 1.30, Arat. 191, 372, Mosch. *Eur.* 142), but Nic. has progressed further by using a compound. The verb is well chosen and reinforced by both ἑκάτερθε and the adj. Thus the dragon is said to sport long rows of teeth, all around, on both sides and in three rows.

443 **ὄθματα:** see 178 n. and Introduction 6.3.

**νέρθε δὲ πώγων:** the use of νέρθε is restricted to poetry and quite rare. Nic.'s line-end here echoes Homer's νέρθε δέ ποσσίν (*Il.* 7.212, 13.78) and νέρθε δὲ γοῦνα

(*Il.* 22.452), both at line-end and both referring to limbs of which snakes in particular are deprived. If Nic.'s imitation is intentional, his alternative πώγων may be significant: the dragon may lack feet, but it does have an impressive beard, which separates him from the other serpents. The use of πώγων for the appendage under the dragon's chin, resembling a beard, probably imitated by Philumenus in his description of the dragon (ὑπὸ δὲ τῷ γενείῳ ἀπόφυσίν τινα ἔχουσιν, ἣν καλοῦσιν πώγωνα, *Ven.* 30.2), may well be an invention of Nic. But elsewhere the noun is used for other kinds of animals too; of fish (Clearch. fr. 110.10 K-A), of a cock sparrow (Arist. *HA* 613a31), of a billy-goat (εὐπώγων, Leon. Tarent. *AP* 9.99 = *HE* 2161). The dragon's 'beard' seems to have made an impression on Posidippus as well, as is clear from his description of the so-called snakestone, where the dragon's head is called 'well-bearded', δράκοντος … εὐπώγων … κεφαλή (Posidipp. 15.1–2 AB = *HE* 3166–3167).

444 **ὑπ' ἀνθερεῶνι:** 'under the chin'. The noun is elswhere (Homer, Hippocratic corpus) only used for humans, compared to πώγων in the previous line, which is used for all kinds of beings; see De Stefani on Nonn. *Par. Ev. Jo.* 1.21. Here we have another example of the transference of vocabulary from the human realm to that of the natural world of animals, on which see Introduction 8.1.

444–445 **οὐ μέν … | … χαλεφθῇ:** the description of the superficial and innocuous wound here is unexpected, particularly after Nic. has mentioned the frightening triple rows of teeth in 442.

445 **ἔκπαγλα:** adv. a very rare variant of the common ἐκπάγλως. The adverbial ἔκπαγλον, less common than the latter, is used in 448, on which see n. The adv. ἔκπαγλα is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 5.423 which ends in ἔκπαγλα φίλησε, with which Nic.'s ἔκπαγλα χαλεφθῇ (same *sedes*) contrasts sharply. Apart from S. *OC.* 716, the only other instance before Nic. is Arat. 1049.

446 **βληχρόν … νύχμα:** for the *hyperbaton* see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8. For νύχμα cf. 271.

**μυὸς οἷα μυληβόρου:** introducing a brief simile; see Introduction 8.7. Despite the fact that the dragon has three rows of teeth (442) its bite is apparently as harmless and superficial as that of a nibbling (μυληβόρου) mouse.

**αἱμαχθέντος:** either referring to the victim, who has been made to bleed, or to the blood-stained fang of the dragon which has bitten, in which case the corresponding part. comes before the adjunct governed by ὑπό.

### *448–457 The Dragon and the King of Birds*

The description of the dragon is followed by a digression on the King of Birds, i.e. the eagle, which is presented as the perennial enemy of the dragon. As Spatafora stresses (2007a, 138), the enmity is not limited to Nic., considering frequent mention of their hostility elsewhere (*Il.* 12.201–207, Arist. *HA* 609a4, Plu. *De invidia* 3). As Effe (1974a, 58) points out, the battle between the dragon and the eagle here is to be considered the counterpart of the battle between the asp and the ichneumon in 190–208. It it striking that both digressions end without a clear conclusion, which can be explained either because the outcome of the encounter is not essential to the poet's digression, and mainly serves to elaborate on the snake's behaviour, or because no single solution would make sense: sworn enemies as they are, the eagle and the dragon will engage in battle time and again and the outcome is not of singular importance, uncertain and variable as it is. For digressions as defining elements of the structure of the poem see Introduction 5.7.

448 **τῷ μέν τ' ἔκπαγλον κοτέων:** possibly in imitation of *Il.* 2.222–223, τῷ δ' ἄρ' Ἀχαιοί | ἐκπάγλως κοτέοντο, where the assembled Greeks in Troy find fault with Thersites; the combination, introduced by τῷ as the dat. complement, of κοτέω with this particular adv. is not found elsewhere. The wrath of the eagle towards the dragon may thus be compared to that of the Greeks towards the despicable Thersites, in which case the eagle is considered to be right and just, whereas the dragon is ugly and obtrusive, which may well be what the poet wants us to think. But just as much is Thersites is part of the Greek army, and has therefore every right to be present and speak up, the dragon will ultimately not be defeated as it is part of life and merely acts according to its nature.

**ἔκπαγλον:** in general Nic. never uses the same word twice within a limited space of text, which is again illustrated here. In 445 ἔκπαγλα is used adverbially, prompting the poet to use the variant ἔκπαγλον here. The regular adv. ἐκπάγλως, being too common and therefore less poetic—according to the general aesthetics of most Hellenistic poets—is avoided by Nic. In addition, Nic. normally does not, like most of his peers, imitate earlier poetry without making slight alterations as he did here of the Homeric ἐκπάγλως (on which see the previous n.), showing his poetic inclinations; see Introduction 6.10.

449 **ἐκ παλαχῆς:** according to Σ *Ther.* 448–449 the expression should be interpreted as ἐξ ἀρχῆς here, 'from the beginning', which could either mean 'as soon as it is born', or 'for as long as we can remember'. Some of the mss have ἐξ αἴθρης, referring to the eagle's habit of attacking from high in the

sky downwards, perhaps because ἐκ παλαχῆς did not make any sense to the responsible scribe. It could be argued, however, that ἐκ παλαχῆς is to be taken more literally as 'that which is determined by lot' (παλάσσω). This implies that the enmity between the eagle and the dragon is not so much qualified by the poet from a temporal perspective ('from the earliest days'), but from the perspective of inevitability: fate has decided that the dragon and the eagle will be perennial enemies, as this is their destiny by nature.

Cazzaniga (1966b, 281–283), for some reason unhappy with the superfluous and dull ("banale") addition βασιλήιος ὄρνις, connects ἐκ παλαχῆς to the eagle's royal status, and not the enmity between the eagle and the dragon itself. The eagle has been allotted the status of king of birds by fate, which is why it is so fiercely defending its realm: the intrusion of the dragon undermines the eagle's authority.

450 **βλώσκοντα:** Nic. seems to be the only author to use the simple of this verb; compounds are found a few times in Homer and Apollonius, but are not very common either.

451 **πάσας γὰρ ὅ γ' ἠρήμωσε καλίας:** there is a clear reverse parallel between the dragon, which prowls the nests of birds, devouring the young birds and the eggs, and the ichneumon, which is said to break the asp's eggs (192–193). In this way the digressions are mirrored, functioning as structuring devices, yet showing variation; see Introduction 5.7. καλίας originally were granaries (Hes. *Op*. 301, 307) or houses (Hes. *Op*. 324); only in later poetry the word came to be used for bird's nests (Theoc. 29.12), as Nic. uses it here. Reinsch-Werner (1976, 150 n. 2) points at the fact that Nic. uses the Theocritean meaning, but at the same time retains the Hesiodic form at line-end, with a long iota.

452 **κτίλα:** the sense is not clear here. Elsewhere the adj. means 'tame', or 'gentle' (Hes. fr. 323 MW = Σ *Th*. 452c), which, of course, cannot be said of eggs; cf. 471. Perhaps 'cherished' is meant, which would be a perfect counterpart of the asp's eggs in 191–192, which are called λύγρα by the poet, whose sympathy is clearly not with the snakes. To underline the parallel between the digressions in 191–192 and 451–452 it can be observed that ὤεα occupies the same *sedes* here as in 192.

453 **ῥῆνα:** 'lamb'. The nom. *ῥήν is not attested (although the relation to ἀρήν is evident), and the only other instance of the word is ῥήνεσσιν in A.R. 4.1497, which may have inspired Nic. to show his awareness of the Apollonian rarity by using an other case and number; for cognate compounds (e.g.

πολύρρηνες, ὑπόρρηνον in Homer, probably Apollonius' source) and derivatives (ῥηνικός, 'from the sheep'; ῥῆνιξ, 'sheep fleece') see Livrea 1973a, 419 and Beekes 1283.

455 **θάμνου ... δαιτός:** after the enmity between the eagle and the dragon, as narrated by the poet, has slowly been built up, the pace of the action quickens and here we find in one verse the attacking snake, the avoiding eagle, and the start of the ensuing battle. The double change of subject (from the snake to the eagle, and from the eagle to both) is somewhat reminiscent of dramatic *antilabe*, where the same technique of changing subjects within a line is used to speed up the action, e.g. E. *Supp.* 818–820, Ar. *Ra.* 26, 40, 51. For the same technique of conveying a sense of action through multiple changes of subject within one or two lines see e.g. Call. fr. 75.38–40 Harder.

**δαιτός:** a Homeric word discussed by the ancient grammarians. Point of dispute is whether the noun is used for human meals only, as contended by Aristarchus, or for food in general, including animal food. The latter opinion is defended by Zenodotus, owing to a different reading of *Il.* 1.5, where δαίτα is read for πᾶσι (Pfeiffer 1968, 111); *Il.* 24.43, though not discussed, shows the same transfer of δαίς to animals. Athenaeus in turn refutes Zenodotus for this alteration, claiming that the word is derived from δαίεσθαι, 'to divide' or 'to distribute in equal portions', a sign of the fair dealing of humans animals are incapable of (1.12e–13). Thus δαίς is a word that can only refer to human meals; Athenaeus does not seem to be aware of the instance in *Il.* 24.43.

The restriction of δαίς to human food is strictly observed by Hesiod, Pindar and Apollonius, but ignored by the tragedians, Theocritus and the later epic poets; see Rengakos 1994, 68. Whether Nic.'s choice to use the noun for animal food is a deliberate nod at the controversy, or merely common usage, is hard to decide, but Nic.'s use of a word from the realm of human culture (if that is the case) accords with his general inclination to depict animals as human beings, rather than biological entities; see Introduction 8.1. Descriptions such as these, where the strict division between humans and animals is blurred, show the distinction between biological prose in the vein of Aristotle, Theophrastus and the likes, and poetic elements borrowed from epic.

456 **ἱπτάμενον:** as a reduplicated equivalent of πέτομαι, the verb is post-classical; see Rutherford 1881, 373. Although occasionally used in Hellenistic poetry (Posidipp. *APl* 275.4 = *HE* 3157 = 142 AB, [Theoc.] 23.59, [Mosch.] 3.43) the verb does not seem to be a poeticism.

**ἀτέλεστα διώκει:** the use of the neut. plur. of this adj. for the adv. is rare; cf. Alex. Aet. *CA* 3.13, p. 122 (9 Lightfoot) and Strat. *AP* 12.21.3 (15 Floridi). Nic. may have picked it up from Arat. 678, πάντα γε μὴν ἀτέλεστα διωκομένοιο Λαγωοῦ, where the adv. is used in combination with διώκειν as well. But whereas in the *Phaenomena* it is the hare that is being chased without cease, Nic. has changed the perspective to the eagle and the dragon, which chase each other endlessly. The chased hare (*Ther.* 453), central in Arat. 678, is reduced to a catch between the two. The adv., literal in Arat. as it expresses the endless turning of the constellation, is used by Nic. in a more down-to-earth manner, giving the verse a dramatic touch.

457 This is the only instance of word-end after a spondaeic fourth foot (violation of Naeke's Law) in the *Theriaca*; see Maas § 92, West 1982, 154 and Introduction 6.11. This shows Nic. to be much closer to Callimachus (no violation) than Aratus (30×), Apollonius (68×) or Theocritus (49×). The violation appear to be due to the poet's urge to vary both on Homer and Callimachus; see below.

**λοξὸν ὑποδρὰξ ὄμμασι λεύσσων:** λοξόν is often used, either adjectively or adverbially, with verbs of watching in combination with a reference to the eyes; cf. Anacr. 72.1 *PMG* (λοξὸν ὄμμασι βλέπουσα), Sol. 34.5 *IEG*$^2$ = 29b Gentili-Prato (λοξὸν ὀφθαλομοῖς ὁρῶσι), Theoc. 20.13 (ὄμμασι λοξὰ βλέποισα), Call. *AP* 7.525 = *HE* 1183–1184 (21 Pf.) = fr. 1.37–38 Harder (ἴδον ὄθματι … λοξῷ), A.R. 4.475 (λοξῷ ἴδεν … ὄμματι). Nic. has made a different or perhaps new combination by using the verb λεύσσω, which is otherwise not found in combination with λοξόν. In addition, the rare adv. ὑποδράξ is used, a late and apparently contrived form of ὑπόδρα (26× in Homer, always in the combination ὑπόδρα ἰδων; see Holoka 1983). However, Nic. seems to have adapted Callimachus rather than his predecessors, as *Hec.* fr. 72 H. (374 Pf.) has ὄμμασι λοξὸν ὑποδράξ ὀσσομένῃ. It seems that Nic. changed ὀσσομένῃ into λεύσσων, showing his awareness of Callimachus' conflation of two expressions (viz. ὄμμασι λοξόν with a verb of watching, and ὑπόδρα ἰδών), and yet capping him by varying on Callimachus' phrasing. That Callimachus himself is already playing with variations on the Homeric phrase ὑπόδρα ἰδών is shown by e.g. *Iamb.* fr. 194.101–102 Pf., which has ὑποδράξ … ἔβλεψε. As Hollis (2009, 240) points out, Nic.'s choice for ὄμμα here (as opposed to ὄθμα, cf. 178 and *Al.* 33, 243), found in all mss, is probably due to his imitation of Call. *Hec.* 72 H. (374 Pf.)

### *458–482* *The* Cenchrines

After the digression on the dragon and the eagle, which rounds off the section on the dragon, the next snake treated is the fearful *cenchrines* (central Turkish mountain viper, *Vipera* (*Daboia*) *xanthina*, Leitz § 25). The passage opens with learned topographic references, some based on mythology with sites related to Hephaestus and Orpheus, to the places in Thrace where the *cenchrines* is likely to be encountered. After a description of the snake's appearance and the damage its bite can cause the poet proceeds to describe an additional trademark of the snake's ways of attacking. The poet does, however, offer useful ways of beating the snake to the punch by weaving a crooked path to shake it off and cause it to injure itself. The passage is rounded off in a ring composition by once more referring to the monster's general whereabouts, i.e. the isles of Thrace.

The combination of practical information on the one hand, and the description of a remote area on the other, in particular a rough region where the internal addressee is not likely to go, is exemplary of the friction in the poem. The idea of genuinely imparting information through text, within the framework of an apparently real teacher and a real pupil is maintained, while that same text is concerned with learnedless rather than learning, and with exciting rather than useful details. See Introduction 8.5.

458 **Εἴ γε μέν:** for the combination of εἰ and the particle γε as a section marker see 98 n. and Introduction 5.10.

**Ἡφαίστοιο χαλαίποδος:** varying on *Il.* 18.371 and 20.270, where Hephaestus is called κυλλοποδίων, 'club-footed'. According to Σ *Ther.* 458a Nic.'s *hapax legomenon* χαλαίπους is a v.l., next to χωλοίπους, which is found in some mss. It is striking that Nic. has singled out this particular quality of the god, as in Homer the positive epithets (περικλυτός, πολύφρονος etc.) are much more frequent than the adj. referring to Hephaestus' limp, which occurs only twice. Perhaps this is due to the generally negative tone of the poem, which deals with the fragility of the body, rather than heroic concerns.

**ἐν πτυχί:** the dat. πτυχί is a lexical rarity and a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 20.22. Other instances (*h.Ap.* 269, *h.Merc.* 555, Pi. *Pae.* fr. 59.7 and Simon. *APl* 26) are all relatively early. Nic. seems to be the first to introduce this form again, but whereas in previous instances the noun refers to valleys of mountains (Olympus, Parnassus, Tomarus and Dirphys), Nic. refers to the valleys of Lemnos, even though the island is not literally mentioned here.

**459 Σάμον δυσχείμερον:** the terminal acc., expressing the goal after a verb of motion without a preposition, is limited to poetry; Smyth § 1588. The reference is to the island of Samothrace, not to Samos as we know it, nor to the Σάμος (also known as Σάμη) Homer is usually referring to. In *Il.* 13.12–13 this Samos is specified as Σάμου … | Θρηικίης (cf. *h.Ap.* 34.), but elsewhere Homer refers to Samothrace without the addition of 'Thracian', as in *Il.* 24.78 and 753. There do not seem to be many instances of Samos being short for Samothrace and Nic. seems to have revived a Homeric rarity here. There is, however, the alternative Σάος as a variant for Σάμος, which occurs in 472 and has a precedent in Lyc. 78, although there it designates a town on Samothrace; according to Von Holzinger (1895, 178) Σάος is the old name of both the island and its mountain.

In Homer the adj. δυσχείμερος is used only of Dodona (*Il.* 2.750, 16.234) and there are no previous examples of Samothrace being called δυσχείμερος, although A.R. 1.213 has Θρήκης δυσχειμέρου, which may have induced Nic. to use the adj. for Σάμος Θρηικίη too. Nic.'s poetic licence, based on the Homeric example, was, however, corrected by Eutecnius in his paraphrase of the *Theriaca* (δυσχείμερον Σαμοθρᾴκην, 44.14 Gualandri).

**459–460 αἵ τ' ἐνὶ κόλπῳ | … βέβληνται:** the relative clause, with the addition 'in the Thracian gulf', makes clear that it is Samothrace the poet has in mind. Both this description and the periphrastic 'island of limping Hephaestus' in 458 are ways of giving regular information more cachet, which is typical of Nic.'s poetics, as anything too common is adapted to suit his epic-didactic register.

**460 Ῥησκυνθίδος Ἥρης:** Rhescynthus is a mountain in Thrace, on which a temple of Hera was situated; see Σ *Ther.* 460d and Jacques 2002, 140. Nic.'s point is to indicate the region he has in mind by casually naming some of its places, but at the same time he takes the opportunity to show his knowledge of a local sanctuary, which does not seem to have been widely known. For the topos, associated with Hellenistic poetry, of displaying one's topographical learning see Introduction 8.5.

**461 Ἕβρος ἵνα Ζωναῖά τ' ὄρη:** the river Hebrus and the Thracian town of Zone are mentioned together in Hdt. 7.59, and in the fourth-century BCE geographical compilation known under the name of the sixth century geographer Scylax (67.3 Shipley), which tells us the Hebrus and the trade-towns of Drys and Zone are on the mainland opposite of Samothrace. The town of Zone is on the foothills of the mountains of Zone. That the mount of Zone was associated with

the place where Orpheus made the trees dance with his song, an event to which *Ther*. 462 refers, is clear from Nic. fr. 27 G-S, τῷ μὲν ὑπὸ Ζωναῖον ὄρος δρύες ἀμφί τε φηγοί | ῥιζόθι δινήθησαν ἀνέστησάν τε χορείην | οἷα τε παρθενικαί. The same connection is made by Apollonius at the beginning of the *Argonautica* (A.R. 1.28–31), φηγοὶ δ' ἀγριάδες' κείνης ἔτι σήματα μολπῆς, | ἀκτῇ Θρηικίῃ Ζώνης ἔπι τηλεθόωσαι | ἑξείης στιχόωσιν ἐπήτριμοι, ἃς ὅ γ' ἐπιπρὸ | θελγομένας φόρμιγγι κατήγαγε Πιερίηθεν.

**χιόνεσσι φάληρα:** the Zone-mountains are 'patched with snow', a combination not found earlier. φάληρος (from φάλαρον, φάλος, 'boss' or 'disc') means 'having a patch of white', said of animals (of a dog in Theoc. 8.27, as the name of a ram in 5.103); elswhere in the *Theriaca* snow-clad mountain-tops are referred to by means of the adj. νίφοεις; cf. 145, 291, 440.

**462 καὶ δρύες Οἰαγρίδαο:** the oaks of Orpheus. Although not restricted to epic, the use of a patronymic *antonomasia* is highly reminiscent of Homeric diction. This particular patronymic, however, was not borrowed from Homer, as Orpheus does not appear in Greek literature before Simonides. As in Homer (e.g. *Il.* 1.552), the patronymic can stand alone if it is clear who is referred to, which is obvious in the case of Orpheus, who is mentioned more than once in earlier Greek literature as being the son of Oeagrus (e.g. Pi. fr. 128c.11, Pherecyd. 63a.4, Pl. *Smp.* 179d.2, A.R. 1.23–25, Phanocl. *CA* 1.1, p. 106). This patronymic only occurs in B. 28.8 Maehler (Οἰαγρίδα[ν]). Elsewhere usually a genitive of origin is found, occasionally lacking the name of Orpheus himself, as is the case in Nic. here, e.g. Hermesian. *CA* 7.1 p. 98 (υἱὸς ... Οἰάγροιο), A.R. 1.570 (Οἰάγροιο πάις). Pindar gives two different traditions, one in which he is Oeagrus' son (fr. 128c.11), and one in which Apollo is his father (*P.* 4.177–178).

Orpheus' charm, enabling him to enchant birds and beasts with his singing, is already found in Simonides (62 *PMG*), although there trees are not among those captivated. The first source to mention trees is Bacchylides (δένδρα, 28.6 Maehler), followed by E. *Ba.* 560–564 (δένδρεα), whereas elsewhere rocks are mentioned (E. *IA* 1–4); A. *Ag.* 1629–1630 states that Orpheus enchanted 'all'; cf. Gantz 1993, 721–722. There is, however, no reference to oaks (δρύες) in particular in any of the earlier sources and the first instances of this image seem to be Antip. Sid. *AP* 7.8.1 (*HE* 228), Damag. *AP* 7.9.3 (*HE* 1381), and adesp. 7.10.8 (*HE* 1173) who may have been earlier than Nic. If not, we can imagine that Nic.'s addition was original, showing his knowledge, much in the vein of Hellenistic poetry in general, which was concerned with details of this kind. For a second instance of Nic. speaking of δρύες in relation to the Orpheus story cf. fr. 27 G-S.

Whether or not the oaks were known as a specific spot, thought to be the very oaks from the myth of Orpheus, the reference is to Thrace rather than to a particular site. Thus the phrase is meant to be an addition to other characteristic sites of Thrace, without existing as a traceable place. The combined references in 458–462, pointing at topography of islands and a river, mythology and religion give a varied picture of what Nic. could plainly have described as 'Thrace'; see Introduction 8.5. Apollonius, when describing Orpheus' origin at the opening of his catalogue of Argonauts (1.23–34), calls the famous oaks φηγοὶ δ' ἀγριάδες. Nic.'s choice, however, may be an etymological joke, as one of the two trade-centers (ἐμπόρια) mentioned by ps.-Scylax (67.12 Shipley) on the shore of Thrace is called Δρῦς, the other (as aforementioned) being Ζώνη. The existence of a town called Drys in Thrace may thus have triggered Nic.'s pun, connecting mythology with reality through etymology, which, of course, does not work with Apollonius' φηγοί.

**Ζηρύνθιον ἄντρον:** the cave of Zerynthus is only mentioned earlier in Lyc. 77, Ζήρυνθον ἄντρον τῆς κυνοσφαγοῦς θεᾶς ('the Zerynthian cave of the dog-slaying goddess', i.e. Hecate), and is not to be confused with Zerynthus, which occurs in Lyc. 449 and 1178, a town on the coast of Thrace near the mouth of the Hebrus; see Von Bredow 2002, 776–777. Later references to the cave of Zerynthus are found in Ovid. *Tr.* 1.10.19–20, and Σ Ar. *Pax* 277–278. The cave was in the north of Samothrace (Mooney 1921, 10) and was apparently sacred to Hecate, to whom dogs where sacrificed there (Σ Lyc. 77 Scheer). The addition of this site to the other references in 458–462 may seem to be nothing more than the poet displaying his knowledge of rare sites and customs (see Introduction 8.5), but Nic. may be genuine in wanting to provide his readers with interesting facts.

**463 δήεις:** see 100 n.

**κεγχρίνεω:** probably identical to the snake known as κεγχρίας; Leitz 1997, 119–126; for other possibilities see Spatafora 2007a, 139. A κεγχρίνη appears as the snake that bites Philoctetes in Lyc. 912, although other sources state that it was a *hydrus* (or simply a 'snake', ὄφις in S. *Ph.* 1328), that caused his wound; cf. Gow & Scholfield 1953, 179. If κεγχρίνεω is considered an acc. the ending in -εω is problematic. Although our texts of Homer do endorse acc. sg. such as ἱδρῶ (*Il.* 4.27, 10.572 et al.), γέλω (*Od.* 18.350) and ἠῶ (*Il.* 5.267, 12.239 etc.), these acc.'s seem to be contractions, whereas κεγχρίνεω most likely is not. If Nic., however, considered an acc. ending in -εω to be valid, this may be a case of poetic licence, based on Homeric precedents. Grammatically better, although awkward in sense, is the explanation of κεγχρίνεω as an explicative gen. to δολιχὸν τέρας.

**τέρας:** this is the only instance in the *Theriaca* of a serpent being called a τέρας, which perhaps indicates that we are to picture a different kind of reptilian monster, rather than a regular snake as we know it. The word τέρας is not used to designate any kind of common snake in Greek literature, but is always used for mythical, though often snakelike, monsters; cf. *h.Ap.* 300–302, κρήνη ..., ἔνθα δράκαιναν | κτεῖνεν ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς ἀπὸ κρατεροῖο βιοῖο | ζατρεφέα μεγάλην, τέρας ἄγριον, of the dragon Pytho killed by Apollo; A.R. 2.404–405, ἄλσος ... τόθι κῶας ἐπ' ἄκρης | πεπτάμενον φηγοῖο δράκων, τέρας αἰνὸν ἰδέσθαι | ἀμφὶς ὀπιπεύει δεδοκημένος, of the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece in Colchis; Pi. *P.* 1.26, κεῖνο δ' Ἀφαίστοιο κρουνοὺς ἑρπετόν | δεινοτάτους ἀναπέμπει· τέρας μὲν | θαυμάσιον προσιδέσθαι, | θαῦμα δὲ καὶ παρεόντων ἀκοῦσαι, again of the monster Pytho, E. *Ion* 989, ἐνταῦθα Γοργόν' ἔτεκε Γῆ, δεινὸν τέρας, again of a mythical reptilious monster, viz. the Gorgo.

**463–464 ὅν τε ... | ... αὐδάξαντο:** for the pattern cf. 230 n.

**465 πολύστροφον:** perhaps picked up from Pindar (fr. 214.3–4, θνατῶν πολύστροφον | γνώμαν), as quoted by Plato in *R.* 331a8, which is the only earlier instance of the word. The fact that the fragment is quoted in a Platonic dialogue as the illustration of a point indicates that Pindar's poem was probably well-known. Nic. uses it in an altogether different context, describing the variable size and length of the *cenchrines*, but considering the lack of context in the Pindaric fragment it is impossible to determine whether a pun is intended.

**466 κατέχευε:** a particularly horrific image, as the appearance of putrefaction on the skin is not said to turn up gradually, but rapidly, like an ineluctable wave; the same verb is used in 176 to describe the dirt and mud poured into the sea by the Nile, an image which Nic. may have in mind here. See also 437 n.

**467 βόσκονται:** for this use of βόσκω see 244 n.

**467–468 ἀεὶ δ' ὑπό ... | ... ἵζει:** the affliction caused by the bite of the *cenchrines* is very similar to that of the *dipsas*, described in 341–342. In both cases the victim suffers from severe dropsy, which settles in the belly (νηδύς 341/νηδύσιν 467), with the navel as the center of the grief (ὀμφαλόν 342, 468), although ὕδρωψ is only mentioned here as the proper medical name of the affliction. Whether or not the *cenchrines*' bite is lethal remains unclear as the outcome of the disease is—as usually—not mentioned.

**468 κατὰ μέσον ὀμφαλὸν ἵζει:** the same ending is used in *Al.* 26, whereas *Al.* 341–342 has ὕδρωψ | τυμπανόεις ἀνὰ μέσσον ἀφυσγετὸς ὀμφαλὸν ἵζει, in which both ὕδρωψ and a rephrasing of 468 occur. Semi-formulaic endings are rare in Hellenistic poetry as usually poets make sure to vary some of the elements.

**469 ὅτ' ἠελίοιο θερειτάτη ἵσταται ἀκτίς:** a poetic periphrasis of 'in midday', possibly inspired by Arat. 149, ἔνθα μὲν ἠελίοιο θερείταταί εἰσι κέλευθοι, which shows the same order and employs the rare superl. adj. θερειτάτη ('most summerly', i.e. 'hottest'; see Kidd 1997, 237); Aesop. 1.1 Hausrath (ἐν ὥρᾳ θερειτάτῃ) is impossible to date. But whereas Aratus has linked his description of the sun's particular track through the sky to seasonal consequences, Nic. is merely giving a temporal designation of the hottest time of day in summer, making use of an opportunity to employ poetic language.

**470 οὔρεα … ὀκριόεντα:** for the *hyperbaton*, with the alliterative adj. echoing several consonants and vowels of οὔρεα, see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8. The adj. ('rugged', 'jagged') is often used for separate stones or boulders (e.g. *Il.* 4.518, 8.327, 12.380, B. fr. 20D.11–12 Maehler, A. *Th.* 300) or of rugged land (A. *Pr.* 281, A.R. 3.1331), but Apollonius is the first to use it for mountains; Δινδύμου (A.R. 1.1093), κολωνῷ (1.1120). This may have made Nic. make the same connection, by applying the adj. to mountains in general, thus varying on Apollonius' use of the adj. for two mountains in particular.

**μαιμώσσων:** 'seeking eagerly', a late form of μαιμάω, which in turn is a reduplicated intensive form of μαίομαι (Heubeck 1989, 124); only here, as an impressive lengthening. For the use of verbs normally applied to the realm of human emotions and expressions for snakes see Introduction 7.1.

**471 αἵματος ἰσχανόων:** 'longing for blood'. The use of ἰσχανάω with a gen. is rare and Nic. may have based his use on the Homeric instances *Il.* 23.300 (δρόμου) and *Od.* 8.288 (φιλότητος). According to some lexicographers the proper form for these Homeric *loci* is ἰχανάω, related to ἴχαρ, 'desire', which is adopted (cf. Garvie 1994, 299) or at least considered (cf. Kirk & Richardson 1993, 208) by modern critics as well; most mss retain the sigma. According to Garvie these two instances in Homer were probably confused early on with the verb ἰσχνανάω (sic), 'hold back', which is the meaning of the verb in all other Homeric instances. Further proof for the error has been found in Callimachus' use of ἰχαίνει in fr. 178.22 Harder ('desire') which seems to indicate that at least one of the learned poets knew how to use the verb properly. As for Nic., all mss retain the sigma, although the meaning is clearly 'longing', not 'holding back'.

Nic. seems either to have ignored Callimachus' proposed learned correction of the form without the sigma, or not to have been aware of it, although he does show his awareness of the Homeric rarity.

**κτίλα μῆλα:** see 452 n. The only instance before the *Theriaca* of κτίλος used as an adj. for animals is Emp. fr. 130 DK (Σ *Ther.* 452c); cf. *Il.* 3.196 and 13.492, where κτίλος is used as a noun indicating a ram. Interestingly the fragment of Empedocles, ἦσαν δὲ κτίλα πάντα καὶ ἀνθρώποισι προσηνῆ, | θῆρές τ' οἰωνοί τε, φιλοφροσύνη τε δεδήει, is the exact opposite of Nic.'s image: back in the olden days of the primeval world animals lived in harmony both with each other and with mankind and all were kind (κτίλα) to each other. In Nic.'s contemporary world this ancient time of peace is long gone, and θῆρες are hostile and violent both to other animals and to men, as is clear from this line (where the *cenchrines* is on the watch for gentle (κτίλα) sheep), and from the continuous threat snakes pose to men; see Overduin 2014.

**δοκεύων:** literally 'watching narrowly', but the verb often, though not always, has an undertone of hostile intent, or impending attack, as in *Il.* 8.340, 13.545, Hes. *Th.* 772, [Hes.] *Sc.* 333, 425, 480, Lyc. 1168, Arat. 341.

472 **Σάου:** according to Σ *Ther.* 472a either a mountain on Samos, or the whole of Samothrace (ἐκαλεῖτο δὲ Σάος ἡ ὅλη Θρᾳκικὴ Σάμος); cf. Σ AbT ad *Il.* 13.12b Erbse and Σ Lyc. 78 Scheer. For the variants Σάος, Σάμος and Σάμος Θρηικίη see 459 n. Both the use of the rare Σάος here and the reference to the cave of Zerynthus in 462—two rare names in a relatively brief passage—have probably been picked up from the *Alexandra*, as both occur in Lyc. 77–78.

**Μοσύχλου:** found twice before Nic., once in a fragment of Antimachus, Ἡφαίστου φλογὶ εἴκελον, ἥν ῥα τιτύσκει | δαίμων ἀκροτάτηις ὄρεος κορυφῆισι Μοσύχλου (fr. 46 Wyss = 52 Matthews = Σ *Ther.* 472a), and once in a fragment of Eratosthenes, which is probably an imitation of the lines of Antimachus, Μοσυχλαίῃ φλογὶ ἶσον (*CA* 17.2, p. 63 = Σ 472a); cf. Matthews 1996, 183. Mosychlus is the hill on Lemnos on which Hephaestus supposedly had his forge. The reference to Lemnos recalls the one in 458, where the name of the island is circumscribed as well.

**ὅτ' ἀμφ' … | … ἔργα νομήων:** one of the few instances in the *Theriaca* of bucolic imagery in its idyllic sense; cf. Bernsdorff 2001, 188. Some of the typical elements are present, viz. shepherds, resting a while, forsaking their task of herding for a spell, coolness, a nice spot beneath large trees and a break from the regular

work. Other typical elements, however, are not found here, such as pipe playing, a song or a singing-match, *eros*, or the presence of cicadas. Nic.'s depiction leaves no room or occasion for a proper *locus amoenus*; see Schönberg (1962, 18–60) and Fantuzzi & Hunter (2004, 146–148) for typical elements that make up a *locus amoenus*. Moreover, the lurking snake in 471 makes clear that in Nic.'s world there is no space for genuine leisure; cf. Overduin 2014. For Nic.'s use of such vistas to everyday life see Introduction 8.2.

**ἀμφ' ἐλάτῃσι μακεδναῖς:** the adj., a variant of μηκεδανός, is found once in Homer, said of a black poplar, in *Od.* 7.106, μακεδνῆς αἰγείροιο. The only other instance before the Hellenistic age is Hes. fr. 25.13 MW (16 Hirschberger), where the adj. is applied to the town of Pleuron. The next occurrence before Nic. is Lyc. 1273 where the adj. is used, like in Homer, for trees, as μακεδνάς … νάπας shows, designating tall woods. Nic. uses the adj. in the same context of tall trees, showing his awareness of the apt use of the adj. for trees.

The locative use of ἀμφί with the dat. is uncommon and seems to be limited to poetry. Kühner & Gerth give only examples in Homer (e.g. *Il.* 2.388, 5.466, 11.527, 17.267, *Od.* 5.371) and tragedy (E. *IT* 6, *Ph.* 1516, S. *Aj.* 562), but the phenomenon is found in Hellenistic poetry as well, e.g. Theoc. 7.17, [Theoc.] 25.102, Lyc. 286, 335, 1343. The combination is generally used "räumlich zur Angabe des ruhigen Verweilens um, an, neben einem Gegenstande (poet.)"; K-G § 436.1a.II. Nic.'s use, of resting shepherds amidst the trees, seems particularly apt, showing his awareness of the proper use of the preposition within poetic diction.

473 **ἄγραυλοι:** used as an adj. with ποίμενες in Homer (*Il.* 18.162), but Nic. uses ἄγραυλος as a noun here. As McLennan (1977, 44) points out, the substantival use of Homeric adj.'s is quite common in Hellenistic poetry. Cf. 78, where the rare adj. ἀγραυλής is used instead of the regular ἄγραυλος.

**ψύχωσι:** only here in the sense of 'cooling themselves'. But the idea of finding a cool spot beneath the trees (cf. 584), where the wind brings coolness in the shade, is often found in poetry related to herding or land-labour; cf. Hes. *Op.* 593–594, Theoc. 1.2, 5.31–34 and 45–49, 6.3, 7.131–137, [Theoc.] 9.9–11.

**λελοιπότες ἔργα νομήων:** temporarily forsaking the task of herding, to indulge in rest or other pleasures, is not uncommon in bucolic poetry, although some other herdsman may take care of the flock in the meantime, as is mentioned in Theoc. 1.14 (τὰς δ' αἶγας ἐγὼν ἐν τῷδε νομευσῶ), whereas in [Theoc.] 9.3–4 the cattle is left to itself while the herdsmen indulge in a singing-match. For

the importance of herds in the poem, frequently appearing in various synonyms, cf. 5, 28, 48–49, 74, 554, 898.

474 **μή σύ γε θαρσαλέος περ ἐὼν θέλε:** a marked contrast with the world of heroism as portrayed by Homer, or with the acts of courage that are central to tragedy. In Nic.'s world boldness is useless and there is no room for heroes. Only by carefully paying attention to someone who is skilled and who possesses knowledge can one save oneself or be saved. This idea of paying attention when something is to be learned is already expressed in the *Works and Days*, where the poet states in 218 παθὼν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω, 'the fool only knows after he has suffered', which would prove disastrous in the case of the victims of the snakes described by Nic. But although these words are already uttered by Hesiod, their importance reflects a more general idea current in Hellenistic poetry: the days of the old heroes—and the poetry dedicated to them—are over. The new poetry is not concerned with heroic feats, and even within a heroic epic poem, such as the *Argonautica*, the hero is praised for his cunning, rather than his boldness. The modern way to show one's value is to apply scholarly knowledge, and in such an age of learning daring alone is no longer enough to deal with danger. He who ignores the poet's advice is not bold, but merely foolish, stressing the importance of didactic poetry, be it archaic as in the *Works and Days*, or contemporary as in Nic.'s own work.

**ἄντην:** 'face to face with', an epic adv., used in Homer (20×), but rarely afterwards; once in Callimachus and four times in Apollonius. Nic., however, uses it as a preposition here, governing the gen. μαινομένου in the next line. The regular Homeric *sedes* at line-end is retained, as Apollonius does. This is the first instance of the word being used for a face-to-face confrontation between a human and an animal, thus portraying the latter as an entity of equal stature, instead of one of the many animals one is likely to encounter in natural surroundings. Not only does the adv. ἄντην itself (even when used as a preposition) has an epic ring to it, but the way man and foe are pictured also evokes the setting of a battle (cf. *Il.* 11.590); cf. Introduction 8.8.

475 **μή δή σε περιπλέξῃ:** an unexpected turn, as in 465–468 Nic. told his addressee of the putrid affliction caused by the *cenchrines*' bite. Now the pupil is told that he should beware particularly of getting strangled, without further mention of the poisonous infection expounded earlier. Jacques' reading περιπλέξῃ, preferred to καταπλέξῃ and καταφλέξῃ (both in the mss, the former adopted by Gow & Scholfield), is based on the scholia and Eutecnius' paraphrase, which has περιπλακείς (45.16 Gualandri). If Jacques is right, Nic. may be

alluding to Call. *AP* 12.139 (*HE* 1083, 44 Pf.) here, which has μή δή με περιπλέκε in the same *sedes*, although in an entirely different context, of a man who is afraid that a boy will kindle love in him again. Moreover, the last line of Callimachus' epigram has the nonsensical †οσειγαρνης†, which Bentley restored to ὁ σιγέρπης, a word found in Hesychius and explained as λαθροδάκτης, 'biting secretly'. Bentley's proposal presumably refers to a treacherous dog, but the idea of a creature that creeps in silence (σιγ–έρπης) may well apply to a snake. Hollis (1998) argues for reading βρισαύχην ('neck-pressing') which is close to a snake's strangling too. This leaves us with a strong verbal echo of Callimachus' phrase in Nic.'s line, combined with a creeping creature that is said to be περιπλέκειν its victim. In addition, the meaning of the verb περιπλέκειν in Callimachus' epigram is not without problems, as it can mean both 'entangle' and 'embrace'; (cf. Gow & Page 1965b, 164), or perhaps 'wrestle' (cf. Hollis 1998, 73–74). If Nic. was aware of the metaphorical use of περιπλέκειν in the last line, and if Bentley's restoration is correct, Nic.'s use may be a way of reversing Callimachus' figurative use of περιπλέκειν and σιγέρπης to the litteral use of a strangling snake in the *Theriaca*.

The particle δή here, expressing that the snake will obviously strangle you, could either point at its might (i.e. you will not be able to withstand its strangulation) or its intent (i.e. the malicious snake will certainly not let you pass by unscathed; see Introduction 8.1).

**ἀνάγχῃ:** 'strangle', a compound only found here.

476 **πάντοθι:** 'everywhere', a rare adv. not found before the Hellenistic authors. The only instances before Nic. are Theoc. 2.122 and Arat. 743, 1111. Jacques' πάντοθε, a rare v.l. of πάντοθεν, occurs in Theoc. 17.97, but imitation from Aratus is more probable. The phrasing underlines just how powerless man is when he encounters a *cenchrines*, not only as he is being throttled, but also being lashed by the snake's tail.

476–477 **αἷμα | λαιφάξῃ ... ἀναρρήξας:** feasting on someone's blood after having broken his bones is found three times in the *Iliad*, which may be where Nic. picked up the description. In *Il.* 11.175–176, which is part of a simile, a lion breaks a sheep's neck with its teeth and gorges its blood and entrails, τῆς δ' ἐξ αὐχέν' ἔαξε λαβὼν κρατεροῖσιν ὀδοῦσι | πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δέ θ' αἷμα καὶ ἔγκατα πάντα λαφύσσει; Nic.'s λαιφάσσω is a variant of the Homeric λαφύσσω. The same two lines are repeated in *Il.* 17.63–64, which is a kindred simile, and in *Il.* 18.582–583 similar words are used to describe two lions, tearing a bull apart and drinking its blood. In this passage of the *Theriaca* we find descriptions of both

the breaking of the victim's bones (κληῗδας ἀναρρήξας ἑκάτερθεν, 'having broken the collar bones on both sides') and to the gorging of the victim's blood (αἷμα λαιφάξῃ), a combination not found elsewhere, at least not in similar phrasing. If Nic. has based his wording on the Homeric examples, the outcome is an interesting reversal: Homer inserts images from real life into his similes to illustrate his (semi) fictitious poetry, whereas Nic. uses images from Homer's fictitious poetry to illustrate 'real life'; see Introduction 7.3 and 8.2.

478 **φεῦγε:** the snake's speedy retreat is underlined by the holodactylic metre.

480 **πολυστρέπτοισιν:** for the use (or coinage) of compounds in poetry, in particular as a means to achieve a higher stylistic level, see Introduction 6.2.

482 **τοῖος Θρηικίῃσιν ὄφις νήσοισι πολάζει:** the verb is not found elsewhere. Another variant (abAB), though less strict, of the 'Golden Line', lacking the verb in the middle; see 339 n. and Introduction 6.8. With this line Nic. not only rounds off this passage on the *cenchrines*, which started in 458, but also on Thrace, creating a ring composition by once more mentioning the region, as he does repeatedly in 458–462—albeit in circumscribing terms.

### *483–487 The Gecko*

After the description of the serpent that inhabites the region of Thrace, Nic. proceeds with the gecko (called ἀσκάλαβος by Nic., but normally referred to as ἀσκαλαβώτης), an odd choice, as it can by no means be considered a snake. Cf. Arist. *HA* 538a27, where the animal is clearly not grouped with the snakes, ὄφεις καὶ φαλάγγια καὶ ἀσκαλαβῶται καὶ βάτραχοι (similar examples in *HA* 599a31 and 600b22); Σ Ar. *Nub.* 170b, ὥσπερ σαῦρά ἐστιν ὁ ἀσκαλαβώτης. The introduction of the gecko, however, may be a mere excuse to tell another aetiology, which is surprisingly limited to only four lines. This is most likely related to Nic.'s more elaborate treatment of the story elsewhere, viz. in the fourth book of his *Heteroeumena*, as can be gathered from Antoninus Liberalis' paraphrase in his *Metamorphoses*; see 484 n. and Introduction 5.7.

483 **Ἔνθα:** although apparently a demonstrative adv., ἔνθα designates neither place (unless Nic. is still speaking of Thrace) nor time here, but is used indefinitely, in the same way as 'there is/are' in English. According to Klauser (1898, 73) we should interpret ἔνθα as *inter alia* or *praeter alia*, which works well in 599 and 637. Perhaps we should thus take ἔνθα here as "furthermore"; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 140.

**οὐτιδανοῦ περ:** grammatically the adjunct qualifies the gecko and not its bites, but as the adj. is used especially with regard to strength, one can infer that Nic. implies that the gecko's bites are weak too, and therefore perhaps harmless. This is confirmed by the fact that Nic. continues to speak of other harmless creatures (ἄλλα γε μὴν ἄβλαπτα κινώπετα) in 488. Aristotle, however, mentions the existence of lethal geckos in Italy, τῆς δ' Ἰταλίας ἔν τισι τόποις καὶ τὰ τῶν ἀσκαλαβωτῶν δήγματα θανάσιμά ἐστιν (*HA* 607a26), so Nic. may be referring to very dangerous creatures after all.

**ἀπεχθέα:** why does Nic. call the bites of the gecko 'hated', compared to the many different nasty snakebites mentioned elsewhere in the poem? Jacques follows Bentley, who suggests to read ἐπαχθέα, in which case we should interpret 'although the animal is of no account, its bites are burdensome'. There may, however, be good reason to retain the mss reading ἀπεχθέα: Antoninus Liberalis, in his account of the myth (based on Nic., see 484 n.) adds at the end of the aetiological myth καὶ ὑπὸ θεῶν καὶ ὑπὸ ἀνθρώπων μεμίσηται; cf. Spanoudakis 2006, 51. It is probable that he found this particular element of the animal being hated in his source, which was Nic.'s *Heteroeumena*. If the element of the gecko being perennially hated, as part of its punishment, was in the *Heteroeumena* as well, then both Antoninus and Nic. in this line of the *Theriaca* may be referring to it. If this is the case, the transposition of ἀπεχθής from the animal to its bites may be an instance of Nic. varying on his earlier account of the myth.

**βρύγματ':** only here, possibly an invention of Nic. based on the βρυχ-/βρυκ-stem. Cf. βρύγμος/βρύχμος; the same lexical variation in suffix is found in δῆγμα/δῆγμος. Apparently the noun is used as a synonym for δάχμα, which is used nine times throughout the *Theriaca*; for lexical innovation and variation see Introduction 6.2 and 6.10.

484 **ἀσκαλάβου:** emphatically at line-opening; for the proper identification of the creature see Spatafora 2007a, 140. The aetiology that follows is based on the Greek word for gecko, ἀσκαλαβώτης (or ἀσκάλαβος, as Nic. writes it), which, according to Nic., goes back to the metamorphosis of a boy named Ascalabus into a gecko. The story is told briefly in the *Theriaca*, but appears to have been related in more detail in the fourth book of Nic.'s *Heteroeumena*, which was used by the second-century mythographer Antoninus Liberalis (Nic. fr. 56. Schneider = Ant. Lib. 24). Herter (1941, 251) points at the common method employed by Hellenistic poets to refer to their other poems in their work, which seems to be the case here. In addition we have the versions that are told in the

scholia (Σ *Ther.* 484c) and Ovid's version (*Met.* 5.445–461), which may well have been based on Nic's *Heteroeumena* too. For the different versions that seem to have been current at one time or another see Appendix 2.

It is clear that Nic.'s version as told in the *Theriaca* is a conflation of the Metaneira-story (as known from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*) on the one hand, and the myth of Misme and her son Ascalabus (see Ant. Lib. 24) on the other hand. What remains unclear is how the myth was told in the *Heteroeumena*, and what the original folklore version of the story was, if there ever was one. The fact that Nic.'s treatment of the myth in the *Theriaca* is not only concise but also too brief to understand fully is clearly due to the fact that he has his earlier treatment of the myth in the *Heteroeumena* in mind, but to what degree Nic. is varying on his earlier report is hard to determine, given the lack of information on other sources. There is, however, good reason to assume Nic. partly invented the story, in order to provide an aetiology for the Greek name of the gecko. If this is true, most of the background was already there, provided by the Homeric hymn and the tradition of the *cyceon* (see Appendix 2).

**ἐρέει φάτις:** although the metaphorical use of ῥέω, particularly of words or tales 'flowing' (cf. *Il.* 1.249, Hes. *Th.* 39, 83, 97) is acceptable, Jacques' reading ἐρέει seems closer to parallel practice in the *Theriaca* (cf. 10, 343). Phrases like this are used, although with different words and combinations, to introduce an aetiological story in the *Theriaca*, cf. ἐνέπουσιν (10), ὠγύγιος δ' ἄρα μῦθος ... φορεῖται (343). Nic., however, is probably not really referring to a φάτις—a wide-spread popular story—, but to his own version of the myth, as told previously by him in the *Heteroeumena*. φάτις is thus used as a variant of the 'Alexandrian footnote' (see 10 n.), not referring, however, to another version by an earlier poet, but to a different version told previously by the poet himself. Third person expressions of current stories are usually suspect in the *Theriaca*; cf. 10 n. on ἐνέπουσιν. The poet claims that such stories are current and implies that they are well known, whereas the particular version referred to is often an exclusive creation of the poet himself.

484–485 **Ἀχαιή | Δημήτηρ:** although the goddess' cult title, known from Hdt. 5.61 as an epithet for Demeter in Attica (cf. Philet. fr. 45 Spanoudakis = 47 Lightfoot = 17 Dettori) probably has an origin of its own, Nic. implies that it is cognate with ἄχη, 'sorrow', and that the epithet finds its origin in the grief Demeter experienced when she was robbed of her daughter; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180.

485 **ἔβλαψεν:** the image of Demeter as an angry goddess is not limited to Nic. Her reputation is partly based on her rage towards Metaneira in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, and is corroborated in Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter*, where she casts horrible doom on Erysichthon, after having been infuriated by his insolent behaviour. In Call. fr. 63 Harder we find another instance of Demeter bursting out in anger at a girl, the reason for which remains unclear due to the state of the papyrus. Clear is, however, that it constitutes an aetion for the fact that unmarried maidens are prohibited to attend the rites of the *Thesmophoriae*; cf. Call. *Cer*. 5.

**ἄψεα:** technically 'joints' (cf. *Od*. 4.794 = 18.189); cf. Aristarchus, τὰς συναφὰς τῶν μελῶν, οὐ τὰ μέλη· οὐκ ἂν εἴποιμι μηρὸν ἢ χεῖρα ἄψεα, Σ *Od*. 4.794 Dindorf. Cuypers (1997, 226), however, points out that later hexameter poets merely use the noun as a synonym for γυῖα or μέλεα, which is clearly the case here. Nic. may have picked up the expression in A.R. 2.199 or 3.676, which seem to be the first instances after Homer.

486 **Καλλίχορον παρὰ φρεῖαρ:** in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* the goddess is said to be sitting down by the Παρθένιον φρέαρ (*h.Cer*. 99), where she subsequently meets the daughters of Celeüs. The well of Callichorus is mentioned later on in *h.Cer*. 272, where its name functions as a landmark, above which the temple of Demeter is to be built; cf. Richardson 1974, 326. Nic., however, is not the first (nor the last, cf. [Apollod.] 1.30 W = 1.5.1 F.), who has made Callichorus the place where Demeter finds a place to rest, as Call. *Cer*. 15 (τρὶς δ' ἐπὶ Καλλιχόρῳ χαμάδις ἐκαθίσσαο φρητί) and fr. 172 H. (611 Pf., Καλλιχόρωι ἐπὶ φρητὶ καθέζεο παιδὸς ἄπυστος) make the same shift from Παρθένιον to Καλλίχορον, unless the two names refer to the same well, as Richardson suggests; cf. Hopkinson 1984, 93. It is not clear how Nic. means to connect the location of the well with that of the house of Celeüs. The text suggests that the boy Ascalabus was turned into a lizard near the well of Callichorus. Nic. probably meant to incorporate the reference to the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, without picturing exactly what happened where, but the double location of the incident ('near the well' and 'in the house of Celeüs') is awkward.

**ἐν Κελεοῖο θεράπναις:** θεράπνη is occasionally used for 'abode' or 'dwelling', without the negative or humble connotation attached to θεράπνη as 'handmaid'; cf. E. *Tr*. 211, *HF* 370 (sg.) and *Ba*. 1043 (plur.), but apparently only in poetry. It is interesting that Nic. does not refer to a palace (which would corroborate the image of Celeüs and Metaneira as king and queen of Eleusis, cf. *h.Cer*. 171 μέγαν

δόμον) or to a humble dwelling (as in the subsequent versions of Ovid et al., perhaps going back to Nic.'s own version in the *Heteroumena*; see Appendix 2), but chooses a neutral noun, though less common than οἶκος. This may be an indication of his awareness of the dichtotomy between the archaic tale of the Homeric hymn on which he wants to vary here, and the secondary tale of the poor inhabitants of a humble house who receive the goddess hospitably despite their poverty.

**Κελεοῖο:** in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* Celeüs is clearly a king (κοίρανος, *h.Cer.* 97), who is called δαΐφρων (98, 233) and διοτρεφής (184); cf. Philochorus, quoted by Eusebius (*FGrH* 3b, 328, F 104a.2), Ἐλευσῖνος πόλεως Κελεὸς ἐβασίλευσε. Apart from a reference in Bacchylides (fr. 3 Maehler) and a confused genealogical detail in Aristophanes (*Ach.* 48–49) Celeüs is not found elsewhere before Nic.[11]

487 **ἀρχαίη Μετάνειρα:** for the confusion between Metaneira and Misme see Appendix 2. The epithet, when applied to persons, means either 'venerable' or 'old', both meanings being derived from the primary meaning 'ancient'. Nic. may just be considering Metaneira, and by extension the story itself, to be old or of old (cf. πρεσβίστατος in 344), but the adj. also seems to point at the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* in particular, which was considered to be quite old as well. Moreover, Nic. seems to use the epithet to give his story, which may well be at least partly his own invention (see 484 n.), an authoritive appearance: although the story may not be very old, at least Metaneira is. Aesthetic considerations (the epithet ἀρχαίη for Metaneira echoing the epithet Ἀχαιή for Demeter in 484) cannot be ruled out either.

**περίφρων:** only used for women or godesses. In Homer this is the standard epithet of Penelope (50×, complementary to Odysseus' epithet πολύμητις; *LfgrE*), but in later authors the adj. is used much more sparsely. In comparison its most interesting post-Homeric instance is *h.Cer.* 370, where it is said, however, of Persephone, not of Metaneira as it is here. Nic. may be playing with

11 Contrary to other sources (Paus. 1.14.38) Aristophanes makes Celeüs the son of Triptolemos, instead of the father. In *h.Cer.* 185 Celeüs is said to be the son of Eleusinus and the husband of Metaneira, father of four girls and one son, Demophon (165–166, 233–234). For the complex mingling of the myths of Triptolemus, Demeter's search of Persephone, Ambas/Ascalabus, and Iambe see Montanari 1974; cf. Appendix 2.

the once-only use of the adj. in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, transported to Metaneira and with the parallel with Celeüs, who is called δαΐφρων ('wise', 'prudent') twice in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (96, 233). Spanoudakis (2006, 54) plausibly suggests a contrast with Metaneira's son Ascalabus here, whose reckless behaviour is the exact opposite of his mother, who is περίφρων; cf. 2.

### *488–492 Harmless Reptiles*

After the aetiological excursus on the myth of the gecko, Nic. rounds off his account of the different kinds of poisonous snakes which started in 157, with a short remark on harmless creatures. As these creatures are innocuous there is logically no reason to include them in an account of poisonous animals, particularly since Nic. does not give any clues about their appearance. The addressee gets to know their names, but as there is no way of telling them from the poisonous species their inclusion is rather pointless. Perhaps Nic. is following his source here without having given much thought to his original purpose, or maybe they are included for the sake of completeness, thus showing the poet's suggested vast learning.

**488–489 κινώπετα βόσκεται ὕλην | … χαράδρας:** an exact repetition of 27 (second half) and 28 (full line), a rare element within Nic.'s style. Not without reason this led previous editors to suspect 28, although it has not been bracketed by either Jacques or Spatafora. In fact most of the different locations and haunts in 488–489 have been mentioned before, viz. ὕλην (5, 135, 400), δρυμούς (28, 222) and χαράδρας (27, 389). Accordingly the poet has not only inserted, albeit loosely, a ring composition in *Ther.* 488–489, but also recaptures some of the haunts discussed earlier, yet this time mentioning them only in reference to harmless creatures.

**490 ἔλοπας:** unidentified; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180. ἔλοψ or ἔλλοψ seems to be used as a synonym for fish in general by later poets (Nic. *Al.* 481, Lyc. 598, 1375, 796, although the latter clearly refers to a sting-ray), or for particular species, e.g. a sturgeon (Matro fr. 1.69 Olson-Sens = *SH* 534, Archestr. fr. 12 O-S = *SH* 142). Originally ἔλ(λ)οψ was an adjectival epithet for fish. See [Hes.] *Sc.* 212, Emp. fr. 117.2 DK; S. *Aj.* 1297, has the alternative spelling ἐλλός, just like Eumel. fr. 4.1 *PEG* (8 *EGF* = Ath. 277d), explained either as 'dumb' (or 'mute' from ἴλλεσθαι and ὄψ, 'with barred voice'), or 'scaly' (cognate to λεπίς/λέπος, cf. the adj. λεπυρός in 136, 803); references from Olson & Sens (1999, 112–113), who discuss the word in different contexts, but not its meaning in *Ther.* 490. For the later use of ἔλοψ for a snake see Spatafora 2007a, 141.

**λίβυας:** unidentified according to Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180, although *coluber florentulus* has been suggested; see Spatafora 2007a, 141. According to Σ *Ther.* 490b these are ἀμμοδύτας ('sand-burrowers'), but are often called *libyes* due to their frequent appearance in Libya.

**πολυστρεφέας:** 'writhing'. The alternative πολυστεφέας, however, makes equally good sense, explained by Σ *Ther.* 490c as δὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς στεφάνους ἔχοντας καὶ γραμμάς, probably referring to many bands and rings, lines, or perhaps patterned markings on the skin.

**μυάγρους:** according to Gossen-Steier (cited by Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180) perhaps a meadow viper, or field adder (*Vipera ursinii*). This identification seems highly unlikely, as the meadow viper is far from harmless and would not fit the category of ἄβλαπτα κινώπετα (488). According to Σ *Ther.* 490d the animals are also known as μυόθηραι or ὀροφίαι. The latter is known from Hesychius as ὀροφίας ὄφις, a tame house-snake; the designation μυοθήρας ('mouse-catching snake') does not help much, as it probably applies to most snakes.

**491 ἀκοντίαι:** according to Philumenus (*Ven.* 26) an alternative name for the *cenchrines* (*Ther.* 458–482), but clearly not for Nic. Its name seems to refer to its habit of attacking by jumping like a javelin (ἀκόντιον) through the air towards its victim. The phenomenon is described in Ael. *NA* 8.13, where the ἀκοντίας is said to be the same as the χέρσυδρος; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 179.

**μόλουροι:** unidentified; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180. Apparently a small kind of innocuous snake. Waern (1951, 44) suggests this may be another kenning, considering the fact that many Greek animal-kennings in -ουρος signify the animal's distinctive tail (cf. αἴλουρος, 'soft-tail' for cat, καμψίουρος, 'curved-tail' for squirrel, κόθουρος 'dock-tail' for fox; examples from Hesychius, see Waern, 43). If this derivation is correct it is still hard to see how μόλουρος should function as a kenning, unless we are to interpret it as 'tail-goer', composed of the -μολ- stem (βλώσκω) and the -ουρος suffix. Cf. Introduction 5.7.

**492 τυφλῶπες:** 'blind snakes', used as a noun here. The same creatures are referred to by Aristotle (*HA* 567b25) as τυφλίναι ὄφεις; other possibilities in Spatafora 2007a, 142.

### 493–714 Part 1*b*: Remedies

After the poet's sizeable account of all the different kinds of dangerous and poisonous snakes, the second half of the first part (part 1*b*) proceeds with remedies, both simples and compounds. This large section (221 lines) on remedies, consisting mainly of recipes, ends in 714 after which the second part of the *Theriaca* starts, devoted to other—non-reptilian—kinds of poisonous animals.

The proper subdivision of this part is not beyond dispute. Gow & Scholfield's division seems arbitrary at times. Schneider (1962, 39 with n. 8) proposes some useful refinements but does not give an overall structure. Jacques presents a new and tidy structure, taking into account the internal logic of individual recipes. In his presentation, however, the distinction between single and compound recipes is not clearly sorted out either. The core of the problem lies of course in the poem itself: although it purports to give a separated-out structure, the result is less lucid than expected. Lines 493–714 can be divided as follows (see also Appendix 1):

| | |
|---|---|
| 493–496 | second proem |
| 497–499 | general advice: fresh herbs |
| 500–508 | Cheiron's root |
| 509–519 | birth-wort |
| 520–527 | treacle-clover |
| 528–540 | compound remedies: fustic, agnus castus, savin, rue, savory, asphodel, helxine |
| 541–549 | Alcibius' bugloss |
| 550–556 | horehound |
| 557–563 | chicken-brain, field basil, marjoram, boar's liver |
| 564–573 | cypress, all-heal, testicle of a beaver, testicle of a river-horse |
| 574–582 | wormwood, bay, sweet marjoram, curd, animal parts |
| 583–587 | hulwort, cedar, juniper, plane, bishop's weed, stag's scrotum, cypress |
| 588–593 | helxine, barley gruel, olive oil |
| 594–603 | pitch, different kinds of fennel, juniper berries, celery, alexanders, myrrh, cummin |
| 604–619 | spikenard, milk, crab, iris, heath, tamarisk, fleabane, elder, marjoram, tree-medick, spurge |
| 620–624 | boiled frogs, snake's liver, snake's head |
| 625–629 | gold flower, blue pimpernel, marjoram, pot marjoram, savory |
| 630–635 | rhamnus |
| 636–644 | two kinds of viper's bugloss |
| 645–655 | root of *eryngo*, bearsfoot, campanula, field basil, celery, anise |

| | |
|---|---|
| 656–665 | different kinds of thistle |
| 666–675 | Alcibius' root |
| 676–688 | bark of the Castor-tree, balm-leaves, heliotrope, navelwort, bindweed, hart's tongue, Phlegyan all-heal |
| 689–699 | dried marten's flesh |
| 700–714 | blood of the sea-turtle, wild cummin, curd of the hare |

Although part 1*b* is clearly a counterpart to part 1*a*, to which it shows many similarities in structure, there are also differences. The contents of part 1*b* warrant even less opportunities for narrative or other kinds of excursus than 1*a*. The impression of a dry catalogue in which ingredients are merely enumerated is strong, caused by the lack of horror which is ubiquitous in the first half, and by the virtual absence of the addressee.

### *493–496 Second Proem*

The opening lines to the second half of the first part (i.e. part 1*b*) act as a second proem, restating the presence of the teacher (through the use of a first person verb, διείσομαι, 494), the addressee (ἀνδράσιν, 494) and the new subjects, balanced by verbal counterparts of the proper proem; see 495 n. Although the new proem heralds the second half of the first part of the *Theriaca* (viz. the part on snakes, as opposed to the second part on other venomous animals) the subject of this second half (viz. cures) does of course not come as a surprise, as it has been anticipated from the very beginning of the poem (e.g. in 2, λύσιν θ' ἑτεραλκέα κῆδευς) and has already partly been treated (35–114); see Introduction 5.6. This combination of separation (i.e. composing two separate sections) on the one hand, balanced by anticipation (i.e. referring to things to come) on the other hand, is reminiscent of the way the part commonly referred to as the 'Days' (765–828) in Hesiod's *Works and Days* is anticipated in the part commonly referred to as the 'Works' by a process of interweaving, as has been shown by Lardinois 1998. Nic.'s way of preparing the reader for the coming of a section on proper cures may thus be a way of imitating Hesiod's compositional technique as applied in the *Works and Days*.

**493 ἐγώ:** the personal pronoun in the first person sg. occurs only twice within the *Theriaca*, here and in 837. Inconspicuous as these instances may seem, they hold key positions within the overall structure of the poem. As is explained in Introduction 5.4, the poem consists of two parts (not taking into account the introductory and closing sections): the first part is on poisonous snakes (157–714), the second on other kinds of poisonous animals (715–933). Both parts in turn consist of a zoological section (descriptions of animals and symptoms

of their bites, 157–492 [= 1*a*] and 715–836 [= 2*a*] respectively), followed by a section on remedies and herbs (493–714 [= 1*b*] and 837–933 [= 2*b*] respectively); see Appendix 1. It can hardly be a coincidence that both instances of ἐγώ occur at the opening lines of the sections on remedies (1*b*, 2*b*). In both cases the use of the pronoun indicates that a new section has started: the poet confirms the bipartite structure of the poem and the clear subdivision within both parts by means of a marked term. At the same time the pronoun helps to re-establish the didactic setting, redirecting the addressee to the part of the poet as a teacher within the didactic framework, by focusing on the first person and the didactic part that is connected to it; cf. Schneider 1962, 10.

Nic.'s self-confident use here is opposite to Aratus', as the only instance in the *Phaenomena* serves to express diffidence in his abilities, οὐδ' ἔτι θαρσαλέος κείνων ἐγώ· ἄρκιος εἴην | ἀπλανέων τά τε κύκλα τά τ' αἰθέρι σήματ' ἐνισπεῖν (460–462), "I am not at all confident in dealing with them [i.e. the five swerving stars circulating changeably through the zodiac]: I hope I may be adequate in expounding the circles of the fixed stars and their guide-constellations in the sky" (transl. Kidd). As Kidd comments (1997, 346): "The nominative is an emphatic assertion of the poet's personality, and A. uses it only here, where its force is modified by being attached to an apparently modest disclaimer". In comparison, Nic.'s highly self-confident stance is more in line with Hesiod (cf. *Op.* 10, 106, 286); Aratus can act as a foil emphasising the contrast between the two Hellenistic didactic poets.

**θρόνα:** only used in plur. In Homer the word is used once for flowers (*Il.* 22.441), indicating, however, embroidered flower images woven into a tapestry, not real flowers, therefore 'decorations'. In Hellenistic poetry the word is always used with the same distinct meaning, viz. referring to plants or herbs used as drugs, either for medical or magical purposes. Of latter use clear examples can be found in Theoc. 2.59, where magical θρόνα are to be smeared surreptitiously on the doorpost of an unwilling lover, and Lyc. 674, where Circe is said to use θρόνα mixed with grain to turn Odysseus and his men into pigs; see Schade 1999, 81. According to Σ Theoc. 2.59 later interpreters considered the meaning to vary according to different regions (Θεσσαλοὶ μὲν τὰ πεποικιλμένα ζῷα, Κύπριοι δὲ τὰ ἄνθινα ἱμάτια, Αἰτωλοὶ δὲ τὰ φάρμακα, ὥς φησι Κλείταρχος). The former use of θρόνα, i.e. for medical purposes, is not only found in Nic. (*Ther.* 99, 493, 936, *Al.* 155), but also in a fragment of Aglaias (*SH* 18.7); for an extended use of θρόνα see 99 n.

**ἀλθεστήρια:** only here. Together with θρόνα and φύλλα (494) Nic. conveys a sense of completeness to his addressee by using three different levels: φύλλα for leaves

and plants in general, θρόνα for herbs used as drugs in particular, and ἀλθεστήρια for medical remedies without the connotation of plants. The composite subject of this part of the poem echoes the composite subject of the proper proem in 1–2, where the poet tells us he will expound the kinds (μορφάς), the wounds (σίνη) and the remedy (λύσιν). The combination ἀλθεστήρια νούσων, in addition, is clearly a verbal echo of ἀλεξητήρια νούσων in 7, but whereas both are used in the same *sedes* at line-end, the former closes off the proper proem, while the latter is used as opening of the second proem in 493.

**494** **φύλλα:** see 493 n.

**ῥιζοτόμον τε διείσομαι … ὥρην:** despite Nic.'s claim to expound the right time for cutting roots, there is no trace of such an account in the *Theriaca*. The only adhortation that comes near is the poet's instruction to cut herbs while they are fresh (νεοκμῆτας, 498), which can hardly be considered to cover the full extent of ῥιζοτόμον ὥρην. Gow (1952b, 180) points in addition at 506, 610 and 612, where some indication of seasonal relevance is given. The inconsistency was noticed by Schneider, who suggests to read ὤρην, explained as *rizotomicas rationes*. This does not, however, solve the problem, as these are not treated in the poem either; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180 and Schneider 1962, 38.

It can be suggested that Nic. soon forgot about his intention and limited himself to his other claims, but there may be additional reasons for bringing up the element of 'the right time'. One of the ways in which Aratus thematically connects himself to his predecessor Hesiod is through their common interest in ὥρη, a noun therefore frequently used by both poets (8× in *Op.*, 9× in *Phaen.*). Although in Hesiod ὥρη is used to indicate 'time' in general as well, it often points particularly at the time of year (450, 460, 494, 575, 584, 664), mainly connected to the specific kind of labour that comes with the season. In the *Phaenomena* we find the same use of ὥρη connected to labour (e.g. 1053), but more generally the poem tells us the signs connected to the seasons, in order for sailors and farmers to make use of the right time. It seems that Nic., being well aware of this thread in both the *Works and Days* and the *Phaenomena*, wanted to insert an imitation of this element, typical of his two most important precursors, in the *Theriaca*, even if there is no clear further elaboration on the topic. This is corroborated by the *sedes* at line-end, which is the most common place for ὥρη in the *Works and Days* (four times out of eight) and in the *Phaenomena* (five times out of nine).

**διείσομαι:** a very rare fut. of δίειμι, which in itself serves as a fut. to διέρχομαι; the only other instances are 837 and the entry διεισόμεθα in Hesychius (δ 1548). This

is one of the infrequent instances in the *Theriaca* where the poet employs a first person verb (cf. 283, 636, 770, 837). For the possible role of these rare occasions in determining the structure of the poem see 493 n. and Introduction 5.9.

**ἀνδράσιν:** although the proper internal addressee of the poem, Hermesianax, is mentioned in the opening lines of the poem (3), it is clear that Nic. is writing with a wider audience in mind than just his pupil, who is only mentioned once and does not reappear. Of course the directives in the second person are implicitly aimed at the pupil mentioned at the opening of the poem, but the lack of personal address towards him suggests that Nic. has a wider audience, or at least a 'general you' in mind throughout the poem. Yet despite the fact that the internal addressee has gone out of sight, there is no formal argument to state a shift of address. In line 494, however, Nic. overtly directs his lessons to 'mankind', who can profit directly from the poet's knowledge, instead of indirectly through intervention of Hermesianax, as follows from the beneficiary husbandman, herd and woodcutter in the proem. In this way, by restating both the addressee and the teacher, a second proem is suggested; cf. 506 n.

The shift in addressee from Hermesianax to an unnamed 'general you' in 21, and again to ἀνδράσιν here is unproblematic. The address to the poet's primary addressee in 3 may be stated in the second person, whereas Nic.'s secondary addres to 'mankind' in 494 is stated in the third person, but this blurred distinction between the different addressees is also found in Hesiod's address to the kings *through* Perses in *Op.* 202, Νῦν δ' αἶνον βασιλεῦσιν ἐρέω φρονέουσι καὶ αὐτοῖς, aimed to the unjust kings, but spoken indirectly to Perses, perhaps implying that Perses is to convey the message to them. Thus Nic. may have reused this precedent, both by speaking to his secondary addressee through Hermesianax (who has turned into a second person general you in 21), and by implying that his pupil is to spread the word and tell mankind (or at least the ploughman, the herdsman and the woodcutter from 4–5) about the wise lessons he has learned from his teacher, the poet; cf. Introduction 4.3 and 4.4.

495 **πάντα διαμπερέως καὶ ἀπηλεγές:** although lacking in verbal similarity, these words function as a counterpart to the poet's claims in the proem. There he states that he will expound his material easily (ῥεῖα) and without fail (ἔμπεδα). Here we find similar adv.'s expressing the teacher's ability to tell his audience all there is to know, straightforwardly and without straying. In addition to this expression of ability as part of the teacher's role, the "beneficiary role of the scientist for mankind" is expressed again, as Sistakou (2012, 201) points out. Of course both the statement in the proem and the one made here not only point at the teacher's didactic abilities, but extend to the poet's skill as

well. Moreover, the adv.'s employed here are reminiscent of Call. fr. 1.3 Harder, ἓν ἄεισμα διηνεκές, from the prologue to the *Aetia*.

### *497–499 General Advice: Fresh Herbs*

The second proem is followed by a brief general instruction to use fresh herbs at all times, particularly when the wound is still fresh. As usual, hardly a line goes by without including a rarity culled from an earlier poet (βλύοντι in 497).

497 **βλύοντι φόνῳ:** the only earlier instance of βλύω is Lyc. 301, where we find φόνῳ βλύουσαι. According to Gigante Lanzara (2000, 243) βλύω is a neologism, synonymous of βλύζω, 'to gush forth'. In Lyc. the combination is used to denote the hands of Hector, dripping with gore as he slays the Greek soldiers in Troy. Nic., who probably imitated Lycophron's phrase, applies the Homeric image from epic battle to the common world, and uses it to describe blood, welling up from the wound of the victim of a snakebite. For the transportation of epic battle images to the world of didactic poetry see Introduction 8.8.

**ποίας:** literally 'grass', but it is more likely that curative herbs are intended. Cf. Theoc. 3.32, ποιολογεῦσα, said of a crone who is gathering magical herbs; see Hunter 1999, 120. In fact the meaning of ποία is close to that of θρόνα, as both words indicate herbs used for either curative or magical purposes; cf. 493 n. and 674.

498 **δρέψασθαι:** for the use of the *infinitivus pro imperativo* as a means to create variation in forms of address cf. ἑλέσθαι (500); see Introduction 6.10.

**προφερέστατον ἄλλων:** an exact imitation of 396. Although formulaic line-ends are part of oral composition, the phenomenon is occasionally observed in written compositions as well, either for metrical convenience, or because they are considered part of epic hexametric diction; cf. ἢ ἐπὶ κοῖτον in 112 and 126. Nic.'s employment of the pseudo-formula here can perhaps be considered an imitation of a marked element of the epic genre. A metrically identical variant of the pseudo-formula is used in 698, προφερέστατον ἄλκαρ, with the first to letters echoing ἄλλων.

499 **ἵνα κνῶπες θαλερὴν βόσκονται ἀν' ὕλην:** similar to ὅθι πλεῖστα κινώπετα βόσκεται ὕλην (27). ἵνα is to be read non-restrictive: for Nic. it is evident that most wooded places hold snakes; a restrictive interpretation makes no sense, as there is no reason to assume that only woods with snakes would contain the necessary herbs.

**κνῶπες:** plur. of κνώψ, a rare shortened form of κινώπετον; see 27 n. The simple is only used by Nic. (499, 520, 751), but the compound κνωπόμορφος (Lyc. 675) shows that the shortening was not invented by Nic.

### *500–508 Cheiron's Root*

Immediately after the second proem (493–499) this passage introduces the addressee to the world of curative plants by pointing out the origin of a particular specimen. Although only the plant *centaury* is supposed to have been discovered by Cheiron, the fact that from mythical—and thus primeval—times on nature has provided man with sufficient means of taking care of himself is one of the few positive elements in Nic.'s gloomy world. The teacher introduces his audience into the ways in which the pupil is to follow the example set by Cheiron, who is pictured as a πρῶτος εὑρετής and make use of what nature has to offer.

**500 πρώτην:** although grammatically only connected to *centaury* (Cheiron's root), a medicinal plant eponymously named after its finder, the adj. suggests the topos of the πρῶτος εὑρετής, of which the story of how Cheiron first came across the root is a clear example; see Introduction 8.3. From the late fifth century on the concept of the πρῶτος εὑρετής became topical in all genres of literature, with the significant detail that these discoverers were not only the first but also the best, as their findings were mature and perfect from the start; Baumbach 2001, 467. This proves to be true at the end of the description in 508, where the root is revealed as being a πανάκειον, which is not so much another name of the plant as a reference to the extraordinary qualities of this plant when it comes to healing. It is therefore no coincidence that Cheiron's root is not only the herb with which the poet starts his account of plants right after the proem, but also that he advises his pupil to pluck this plant first, as it is supposedly the best.

**501 Κενταύρου Κρονίδαο φερώνυμον:** the root named after the centaur Cheiron is the herb known as *centaury*. Although the aetiological story of Cheiron's discovery of the root is not known from other sources, Cheiron's association with curative herbs goes back to Homer: ἐπ' ἄρ' ἤπια φάρμακα εἰδὼς | πάσσε, τά οἵ ποτε πατρὶ φίλα φρονέων πόρε Χείρων (*Il.* 4.218–219), "and with sure knowledge (he) spread on it soothing herbs which once Cheiron had given to his father with kindly intent." (transl. Murray-Wyatt); a similar reference is made in *Il.* 11.832. In these lines Cheiron is pictured as one who disposes of ancient knowledge of curing. Among later sources ps.-Dioscorides (3.6) knows the herb as χειρωνιάς, perhaps using Nic. as his source.

**Κρονίδαο:** it is unusual to designate anyone other than Zeus by using epithets referring to Cronus. Homer, the *Homeric Hymns* and Hesiod alone show hundreds of instances where the patronymics Κρονίδης and Κρονίων are used exclusively for Zeus. A few instances, however, of *genitivi originis* applied to other children of Cronus are known from earlier poetry. In the *Homeric Hymns* Hades is called Κρόνου πολυώνυμος υἱός (*h.Cer.* 18, 32) and Hestia is greeted as Κρόνου θύγατερ (*Homeric Hymn to Hestia* 13). Other examples are known from Pindar: Poseidon is called Κρόνου σεισίχθον' υἱόν (*I.* 1.52) and Ποσειδάωνι ... Κρονίῳ (*O.* 6.29), and Hera is once referred to as θυγατέρι Κρόνου (*P.* 2.39). These are, however, all examples of references to Cronus' offspring by means of the gen. or the adj. use of Cronus' name. In this line of the *Theriaca* we have a proper patronymic using the δᾱ- suffix (Smyth § 845), yet applied to the centaur Cheiron. Although Cheiron seems to be the only one other than Zeus to be given the patronymic Κρονίδης, Nic. is not the first to apply the epithet to the famous Centaur, as a precedent is provided by Pindar. In the fourth Pythian ode we find Κρονίδᾳ ... Χείρωνι (*P.* 4.115); in addition, in the third Nemean ode Cheiron is called Κρονίδαν | Κένταυρον (*N.* 3.47–48).

There are two later instances of the patronymic Κρονίδης applied to Cheiron, probably from the imperial age. The first is from the anonymous *Carmen de viribus herbarum* (GDRK 64.115) and is clearly an imitation of Nic. (as is evident from the phrasing of both 115 and 117; cf. Effe 1977, 198), the second is from the *Lithica* (11) which does not show similarity to either Pindar or Nic. and may have a different origin.

**ἥν ποτε:** for the use of a relative pronoun followed by ποτε to introduce an aetiology, see 439 n. and Introduction 8.3.

**502 Πηλίου ἐν νιφόεντι ... δειρῇ:** although the aetiological story of Cheiron's discovery of the root that became known under his name is not attested elsewhere and may therefore be a Nicandrean invention, the association between Cheiron and the Pelion-mountain is widely attested. *Il.* 16.143–144 (= 19.390) recounts how Cheiron brought down an ashen spear for Peleus from the top of the Pelion, which serves as an interesting counterpart to Nic.'s presentation. In [Hes.] frr. 40.2 MW (28 Hirschberger) and 204.87 MW (110 Hirschberger) Cheiron is said to have raised Jason ἐνὶ Πηλίωι ὑλήεντι, in E. *IA* 705 Cheiron is said to live at the foot of the Pelion, Χείρων ἵν' οἰκεῖ σεμνὰ Πηλίου βάθρα, and Eratosthenes tells us he lives on the Pelion (*Cat.* 40, quoted by Antisthenes, fr. 24a), or, more specifically, in a cave (Pi. *P.* 3.61, A.R. 2.510, Ov. *Fast.* 5.379–384 et al.). Other writers report that the Centaurs in general were thought to inhabit the Pelion (Plb. 8.9.13, copied from Theopomp. Hist. *FGrH* 2b, 115, F 225a.58),

or the foothills of the Pelion (Pi. *P.* 2.44–46), Κένταυρον, ὃς | ἵπποισι Μαγνητίδεσσιν ἐμείγνυτ᾽ ἐν Παλίου | σφυροῖς.

Nic.'s reference to the Pelion as being snowy, whereas other sources refer to it as woody, is common in the *Theriaca*, as the adj. νιφόεις seems to be used as an epithet of all high mountains; see 145 and 440 n. The same phrase is used in 440 and in the *Carmen de viribus herbarum* (Poet. *de herb.* 115), which is apparently an imitation of this line. The use of δειρή, otherwise referring to a neck (289, 748) or throat (435, 732), for a mountain col is rare; earlier instances are found in Pindar (*O.* 3.27, 9.59) and Hermesianax (*CA* 7.54, p. 99 = 3 Lightfoot), but the idea is already found in *Il.* 1.499, where the Olympus is called πολυδειράς, which is possibly connected to δε(ι)ρή, cf. Beekes 2010 s.v. δειράς. For the incongruence between the masc. νιφόεντι and the fem. δειρῇ cf. 129 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**503 ἀμαρακόεσσα χυτή … χαίτη:** the adj. ἀμαρακόεσσα is only found here. For the poetical use of χαίτη for a plant's leaves cf. 60 n. Here the addition of the paronomastic χυτή enhances the richness with which the centaury-plant is portrayed, further underlined by the description ἄνθεα … χρύσεια in 504. For the literary motif of luxurious beauty in descriptions of plants see Spatafora 2005, 237–239.

**505 Πελεθρόνιον νάπος:** Nic. is the first to mention this particular valley, which is part of the Pelion-mountain in Thessaly; cf. 440 n. The relation between the root discovered by Cheiron, known as *centaury* (on which see 501), and this particular valley is made clear by the name πελεθρονιάς, a noun used by ps.-Dioscorides to refer to (a variant of) *centaury*, viz. κενταύρειον τὸ μέγα (Ps.-Dsc. 3.6).

**506 σύ:** although the internal addressee briefly changed from the implicit continuation of Hermesianax/the 'general you' to ἀνδράσιν in 494, Nic. has returned to his former pupil here, whom he addresses in the second person sg. The (indirect) change of address in 494 turns out to be of short duration; it seems Nic. merely made a short interruption in 493 to provide his external addressees with a second proem, but never really abandoned his primary addressee. This brief change of address from the primary addressee to a secondary addressee in the third person has a clear parallel in the *Works and Days*: in 202 Hesiod directs his attention to the kings (νῦν δ᾽ αἶνον βασιλεῦσ᾽ ἐρέω), although his words seem to be spoken directly to Perses, as if the latter is to inform them of the words spoken by the teacher. Subsequently in 213 Hesiod directs his words to Perses again in the second person sg. In the *Theriaca* Nic. has employed the same device: the primary addressee (Hermesianax)

is addressed in the second person, until the poet shifts his address indirectly to ἀνδράσιν in 494, to return to his address to Hermesianax/the general you directly in 506. The indirect address to ἀνδράσιν even last roughly as long as Hesiod's address to the kings.

**αὐαλέην:** see 250 n.

**507 μενοεικέος οἴνης:** although this particular line-end does not occur elsewhere, the adj. is clearly an imitation of Homer, who uses it primarily for food and drink, and mainly in this *sedes*. It occurs in Homer (15×), and once in *h.Merc.* 330, but apart from Apollonius (4×), Nic. (here and in *Al.* 359, 515) and Oppian (*H.* 2.567, 5.374), it is not used elsewhere in poetry. It is somewhat strange that Nic. prescribes a recipe for which 'valued' wine should be needed ('was das Herz begehrt, herzerfreuend, köstlich', *LfgrE*); when dealing with life-threatening dangers such as snakebites, matters of taste are hardly of any importance. It is another indication that Nic. inserts the adj. to show his ableness to find rare applicable epithets, rather than to be precise with regard to the contents of recipes. The alternative 'copious', indicating quantity instead of quality is ruled out by the strict prescription of a *cotyle*, a liquid measure equal to six *cyathoi*.

**οἴνης:** technically not wine, but an old name for vine (LSJ s.v. οἴνη (A)), which was replaced by ἄμπελος already in Hesiod; Chantraine 785. Nic., however, uses it throughout both the *Theriaca* and the *Alexipharmaca* as a rare etymological metonymy for οἶνος. Within Nic.'s poetic diction the common οἶνος (*Ther.* 521, 592, 624, 698, 929, *Al.* 71, 608) is the exception rather than the rule, with thirteen instances of οἴνη in the *Theriaca* and twelve in the *Alexipharmaca*. In addition, ensuring plenty variation, Nic. employs the poetic nouns νέκταρ (667, *Al.* 44) and μέθυ, stemming from epic (*Il.* 7.471, 9.469, *Od.* 4.746, 14.194), in 582 and 619. For the medicinal use of wine see e.g. Spatafora 2007a, 143.

**508 παντὶ γὰρ ἄρκιός ἐστι:** this additional remark serves to explain why men call this plant a *panacea* (πανάκειον), by punning on its etymology (παν-), being all-healing; see Introduction 6.6 and cf. O'Hara 1996, 40–41.

**πανάκειον:** perhaps not to be interpreted as another name of the plant that was called Cheiron's root in 500, but rather used predicatively as a description of its exceptional qualities, viz. 'they call it a *panacea*'. Cf. Call. *Ap.* 40, where Πανάκεια, apart from being a minor deity, is used as a reference to a medicine of healing, yet not in a technical way, i.e. referring to a particular medication

or plant; see Williams 1978, 44. For the relation of the name ('all-heal') to the topos of Cheiron as a πρῶτος εὑρετής see 500 n. and Introduction 8.3. There is, however, another plant called *panacea*, whose proper name Nic. gives as πάνακες in 565, and which seems to be the same as χαλβάνη in 52; cf. 938 n. For the idea of πανάκειον as Nic.'s answer to Hesiod's Πανδώρα, a possible thematic connection underlined by a partially shared etymology, see Clauss 2006, 176–178.

***509–519 Birth-Wort***

After the treatment of the first curative herb Nic. proceeds with the plant birth-wort (ἀριστολόχεια). Jacques (2002, 42; 151–152) considers lines 509–540 to be out of place here as they disturb the division between simple remedies and compound recipes. According to Jacques 508 needs to be followed by 541–556, after which the poem proceeds with 509. From a different point of view, however, it can be argued that the order as transmitted is correct, based on the position of the two stories related to Alcibius.[12] For the attention to the details of the appearance of the plant see 57–79 n.

**509 ἀριστολόχεια:** 'birthwort', a plant 'excellent for women in childbed' (λέχω), although Nic. does not play on the plant's etymology (see Introduction 6.6) here; see Spatafora 2007a, 143.

**513 ἐπιόψεαι:** the fut. ind. underlines the authority claimed by the teacher.

12 The introduction of Alcibius is somewhat puzzling: it is surprising that a name not known from any other source appears twice as some kind of a mythological figure. It appears that such figures (Cheiron, Alcibius, Apollo, Hyperion, Heracles, Cadmus and Harmonia) are introduced not only for aetiological reasons, but also to give structure to what would otherwise be an endless lists of plants, with new recipes as the only principle of structure. It is striking that within the account of curative herbs (i.e. the clearly delimited second half of the first part of the poem) Alcibius' stories occupy a well-balanced position: the herb-account starts at 493 and ends with 714. The first Alcibius-story is told in 541, i.e. 48 lines after the start, whereas the second story related to Alcibius starts at 666, i.e. 48 lines before the end. It is of course impossible to prove that the poet intentionally presents Alcibius here to bring (numerical) balance to the second half of the first part, yet to relocate lines strictly based on technicalities, as Jacques does, is to ignore other principles of structure that may be equally valid. Considering a similar counterpart of two stories in the part on snakes, I choose to leave the Alcibius-passage in its original position. See Introduction 5.7. For a more elaborate discussion see Overduin 2013.

**514 ἐπιστρογγύλλεται:** only here, coined for the occassion. Such coinages help to enliven passages like these, consisting primarily of tedious enumerations.

**515 πυγόνος:** a length of 37 cm; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 224.

**516 πύξου ... Ὠρικίοιο:** 'boxwood from Oricus', a harbour city in Epirus, famous for its terebinths rather than its boxwood; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 180. It is hard to determine whether Nic. is providing his addressee with a useful means of determining the male pear-root by its colour, or is merely displaying his pretended learnedness. For the *hyperbaton* see 15 and Introduction 6.8.

**517 ἔχιός τε καὶ αἰνοπλῆγος ἐχίδνης:** the fact that the female's blows are more dangerous than the male's is already stated in 128–129, τυπῇ ψολόεντος ἐχίδνης, where the pupil is warned to beware of the male, particularly after it has been given a blow by the female. For the technique of interweaving as an imitation of Hesiod see 493–508 n. and Introduction 5.6. The adj. is only found here and may be a Nicandrean invention. Perhaps it was inspired by the Homeric αἰναρέτης, which is a *hapax legomenon Il.* 16.31, but other poets found unique occasions for this prefix too, e.g. αἰνογένειος (Call. *Del.* 92). After the horrendous descriptions of the viper's attack in the first part of the poem, the adj. reminds the addressee of the viper's danger.

**518 ἀγρεύσεις:** a *futurum pro imperativo* rather than a genuine fut., unlike the fut. in 513, where the context is less imperative. The use of the fut. in the second person with jussive force is generally informal (Smyth § 1917; K-G § 387.6) and fits the overall way of address in the poem. For the imperative use of other modes than the proper imperat. see 45 n. For such an imperat. fut. as a means of establishing a range of variations within modes of address see Introduction 6.10.

**ἀπορρώξ:** literally something that is broken off (ἀπορρήγνυμι), which is more or less how Nic. uses the word, viz. 'a piece'; cf. 644 n. on the similarly phrased ῥωγάδι πέτρῃ. Previous poets, however, starting with Homer, used the noun in connection to liquid material as well, *Il.* 2.755, *Od.* 10.514 (metaphorically as a 'piece of the Styx' i.e. offshoot; Ar. *Lys.* 811 seems to be an adaptation of the image), *Od.* 9.359 (ἀλλὰ τόδ' ἀμβροσίης καὶ νέκταρός ἐστιν ἀπορρώξ, referring to the wine brought for the Cyclops, explained in *LfgrE* 2b as wine that is so good that it must be an offspring—and therefore a *part*—of the gods), A. fr. 273a.11 *TrGF* (apparently a reference to the Homeric lines on the Styx), Arat. 45–46 (οἵη ποταμοῖο ἀπορρὼξ | εἰλεῖται, where the movement of the constellation Dragon is

likened to a river), A.R. 4.637–638 (φέρε γάρ τις ἀπορρὼξ | κόλπον ἐς Ὠκεανοῖο; cf. Rengakos 1994, 54). As an adj. ἀπορρώξ is found, in a more literal sense, connected to πέτρα; X. *An.* 6.3.3.5, Arist. *HA* 611a21, Call. *Hec.* fr. 119.2–3 H. (309 Pf.) and *Lav.Pall.* 41. Nic.'s use of the word, i.e. 'a portion', owes both to the latter interpretation ('something broken off') and the former ('a part of', in this case of the boxwood of Oricus in 516).

**519** **δραχμαίῃ:** a portion (ἀπορρώξ, 518) 'of a drachm'. In the *Theriaca* δραχμή always refers to weight, never to coins; cf. 102 n.

**μίσγοιτο:** the pass. ('needs to be mixed with') is rather impersonal, since a directive in the second person would be expected, but Nic. is aiming at diversity here, trying to achieve as much variation as possible within forms of address. Cf. 70 n. and Introduction 6.10.

**κιρράδος οἴνης:** 'tawny wine'. As a fem. adj. κιρράς is a poetic variant of κιρρά, which would be the regular fem. sg. adj. of κιρρός. This is not the first instance of poetic licence when it comes to fem. endings, cf. 131 n. and Introduction 6.2. For οἴνη see 507 n.

### *520–527 Treacle-Clover*

The third simple remedy against snakebites is treacle-clover (τρίσφυλλον). In 525 the description yields another instance of personification applied to a plant; see Introduction 8.1. In addition the passage shows other poetic sophistication, such as a clear epicism in 522, a chiasmus in 523, jingle of vowels in 524 and *variatio* in 527.

**520** **ναὶ μήν:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.6.

**τρίσφυλλον:** 'treacle-clover'.

**ὀπάζεο:** see 60 n.

**κνωψίν:** see 499 n.

**521** **ἠέ που ἐν τρήχοντι … βήσσῃ:** the marked contrast in terrain between πάγος and βῆσσα is reminiscent of 26–27, ἢ καὶ ἀνυδρήεντα παρὲξ λόφον, ἢ ἐνὶ βήσσῃς, | ἐσχατίην, where a similar opposition was made, albeit as part of a larger description; see 21–34 n.

**ἀποσφάγι:** only here. Perhaps the adj. ἀποσφάξ was coined by Nic., analogous to ἀπορρώξ, which he used three lines ago. Literally 'cut off', interpreted by Gow & Scholfield as 'steep', which follows from the primary meaning.

522 **μινυανθές ... τριπέτηλον:** although being told the two other names ('brief-flower', 'trefoil') by which the treacle-clover (τρίσφυλλον, 520) is known may well be of use to Nic.'s audience, it also serves to underline the poet's knowledge of his material and to present him as a man of learning, even if this is perhaps mere book learning.

**ἐνίσποι:** a high poeticism and, although not limited to hexameter poetry, a verb clearly associated with epic (Sideras 1971, 85). Like most later authors (Callimachus, Apollonius, Aratus) Nic. follows the common Homeric *sedes* at line-end.

523 **χαίτην μὲν λωτῷ:** placed chiastically with ῥυτῇ ... ὀδμήν in the second half of the line. For the use of χαίτη see 65 n.

524 **ἄνθεα πάντα ... πτίλα ποικίλα:** a verse rich in aural effect, with the assonant pair ανθ- ~ παντ-, the juxtaposed *homoeoptoton* -ιλα, and a threefold π-alliteration. The aesthetic quality of the line contrasts with the withering leaves (described both by ἄνθεα and πτίλα), resulting in the oppressive stench of the wilted plant that now smells of bitumen (525).

**πτίλα:** not used elsewhere for leaves. The word is used for down or soft feathers (hence the relation to the πετ-/πτ-root) or the like, e.g. the plume of a helmet (Ar. *Ach.* 585), the plumage of a hawk (Ael. *NA* 12.4), white wings (Clytus 1 *FHG*), or even membrane wings without feathers at all (Hdt. 2.76, Arist. *IA* 713a10); in Lyc. 25 πτίλα are used metaphorically of a ship's sails. Dionysius uses the word of the down on a young man's chin (D.H. *Dem.* 51). Latter use suggests that Nic. could be referring to hairlike thistledown, as the little hairs on the plant are likened to a young man's fuzzy down. The adj. ποικίλα, however, implies that leaves are meant, probably because of their shape.

525 **ἀπερεύγεται:** another personification. Unlike the compound προσερεύγομαι (*Il.* 15.621) or the simple verb (*Il.* 6.162, 17.265, *Od.* 5.403, 438), ἀπερεύγομαι is only used with human beings (the exceptions in D.P. 43, 567, 693 and 931, of discharging rivers, are of a much later date), to describe the physical process of vomiting, as in 435 and *Al.* 380 and within a medical context in Hipp.

*Morb*. 2.60.4. Here we have a plant that is said to 'disgorge' an awful smell, οἷόν τ' ἀσφάλτου, 'like bitumen'; cf. Introduction 8.1.

**526 ὅσον κύμβοιο τραπεζήεντος:** 'about as much as a table-bowl'; for the adj. τραπεζήεις see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2. The noun κύμβος (0,6 dl, equivalent to an ὀξύβαφον), although very rare, seems borrowed from daily life, as can be understood from its occurrence in Sophr. fr. 164 Hordern s. (Σ *Ther*. 526b), and is apparently a synonym of κύμβα, which is said in the epitome of Athenaeus to be a drinking-cup (2.2.59). Its rendition here with an archaic gen. in -οιο, together with an otherwise unattested form of the adj. shows how ordinary elements are elevated to suit the poet's lofty style; see Introduction 6.3.

**ἑλέσθαι:** for the use of the imperat. inf. (cf. 498) see Introduction 6.10. A second imperat. inf. in the same sentence (πιέειν) is added asyndetonically in the next line.

**527 καρδόπῳ:** any wooden or stone vessel, used as a mortar here. Another word from everyday life (cf. 526 n.), if its occurrence in comedy can be taken as a valid indication (Eup. 228 K-A, Ar. *Ra*. 1159, *Nu*. 669–679).

**ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγήν:** varying on κνωψὶν ἀρωγήν, at line-end in 520. Nic. always avoids exactly similar phrasing within a close distance. Line 636 ends in ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγούς, which shows another variant. For Nic.'s use of *variatio* see Introduction 6.10.

### *528–540 Compound Remedies: Fustic, Agnus Castus, Savin, Rue, Savory, Asphodel, Helxine*

After the short catalogue of three simple remedies, the next section purports to treat compound remedies (ἐπίμικτα … ἀλκτήρια, 528), a prospect disproved, however, in 541, immediately after the first compound recipe; see Schneider 1962, 39. Although the contents of this section are not of any particular poetic interest, the language adopted here is reminiscent of literary devices used earlier in the poem, such as personification, the lexical reworking of phrases already employed earlier, and the reuse of Homeric words in a new context. They show that the contents of the remedies is not of primal importance to the poet here: from a poetic point of view the manner in which they are put into words is more important and interesting than the information they contain.

528 **νῦν δ' ἄγε:** see 359 n. The combination draws attention to a new section of descriptions on the same level as the previous section, and functions as such as a marker with which the poet subdivides his work into clear-cut paragraphs; cf. Introduction 5.10. The combination also functions as a means to create the illusion of live speech, underlining the here and now of the poet's instructions; see Introduction 4.2.

**νόσων ἀλκτήρια:** showing close resemblance to ἀλεξητήρια νούσων in 7, ἀλθεστήρια νούσων in 493 and ἄρκια νούσων in 837—ἀλκτήρια νούσων in *Al.* 350 constitutes a fourth variant—, yet strictly avoiding verbal repetition. Such repetitions, while showing poetical variety, are strongly reminiscent of Homeric line-ends, consisting of formulae of varying lengths to suit the poet's metrical needs. The variant νόσος for the epic νοῦσος, used here because of prosodic considerations, is not found in Homer, but *Homeric Hymn for Asclepius* 1 (Ἰητῆρα νόσων Ἀσκληπιὸν ἄρχομ' ἀείδειν) at least warrants its previous appearance in epic. The combination echoes the second proem in 493; the poet demarcates the transition to draw the audience's attention, now that the account of compound recipes starts.

**λέξω:** the use of the first person fut., here and elsewhere (283, 494, 636, 770, 837) not only helps to structure the poem by giving clear and marked indications of what is going to follow, but is also part of the fictionalisation of speech and as such a conspicuous element of didactic poetry; see Introduction 4.2 and 5.10.

529 **Θρινακίην:** a distinctly poetic choice. The adj. functions as a recherché alternative for Σικελικός, as from at least the fifth century the Homeric island of Thrinacia was identified with Sicily. Hellanicus (*FGrH* 1a, 4, F 79b) and Thucydides (6.2) tell us the island known as Σικανία (sic) used to be called Τρινακρία, written with a *tauta* instead of the Homeric *theta* and with an additional *rho* because of the etymology of τρεῖς and ἄκρεις (on which see Timaeus, ὅτι τρεῖς ἄκρας ἔχει, *FGrH* 3b, 566, F 37 = Σ A.R. 4.965); cf. Callimachus' designation of Sicily in fr. 1.36 Harder τριγλώχιν ... νῆσος, 'three-cornered island'; cf. Cazzaniga 1964, 287. According to Strabo (6.2.1) the name Τρινακρία is even older than the Homeric Θρινακία, which developed later on, following the principle of euphony. Nic.'s variant is thus the least common (and therefore poetically the most interesting) of the possible variants Σικελικός, Σικανικός and Τρινάκριος.

It is unlikely that the plant referred to here (θάψος, 'fustic') was actually known as the Θρινακίην ... ῥίζαν in Nic.'s time. The only other Hellenistic authors who use the name Θρινακία (either as a noun or as an adj.) are Apollonius, who is referring to the mythical island of Homer rather than the contemporary

island known as Sicily (4.965, 996), and the poet of the Archimedian *Problema bovinum*, who is referring to the 'modern' Sicily, but in a context of enigmatic mathematical questions, posed in the shape of lofty epigrams in an archaising epic style (*Bov.* 3.170.7, 171.17, *SH* 201.4). Nic.'s choice for the rare adj. seems to be triggered by the name of the plant, θάψος, as a city known under the name of Θάψος is found on Sicily.

**ἕλευ:** the only previous occurrences of this imperat. are *Il.* 13.294 and Hes. *Th.* 549 (both in a different *sedes*). There does not seem to be an allusion to the context of either instance, yet the verb's Doric contraction within a context that is predominantly standard epic has a highly archaic ring to it that is almost comical when applied to something as down-to-earth as pulling a root from the soil.

**γυιαλθέα:** only here, just like the Nicandrean variant ἐπαλθέα, used in 500. In fact the whole line seems to be a reworking of 500, where a similar directive is given to 'take' (ἑλέσθαι 500, ἕλευ 529) a certain root (ῥίζαν) with curative (ἐπαλθέα 500, γυιαλθέα 529, *Al.* 423 has the simple ἄλθεα as another alternative) powers. Even when instructions are repeated the poet finds ways to achieve *variatio*; see Introduction 6.10.

**θάψου:** 'fustic'.

**530** **ἄγνου:** 'agnus castus'.

**531** **νῆριν:** 'savin', a variety of juniper.

**πηγάνιον:** 'rue', normally known as πήγανον; Nic.'s variant may be due to Thphr. *HP* 1.10.4 (πηγανίων, plur.). According to Aelian (*NA* 4.14) it is abhorred by snakes, an observation not mentioned by Nic. As it does not occur in the part on snake repellents either (*Ther.* 35–114), Nic. (or his source) was probably not aware of this property of the plant.

**περιβρυές:** only here and in 841. The adj. is probably a Nicandrean coinage, who is known for embellishing luxurious plants with matching epithets, e.g. in 60, 503, 848 (ἀειβρυές). See Introduction 6.2 and 6.4.

**θύμβρης:** 'savory'.

**532** **χαμαιευνάδος:** the variant χαμευνάς was already used in 23 in its literal sense of sleeping on the ground, said of humans. Here the word, otherwise

only used for humans and animals (e.g. of the priests of Dodona known as the Selloi in *Il.* 16.235, of pigs in *Od.* 10.243, of lions in Emp. fr. 127 DK) is used in a personification of the plant θύμβρη ('savory'), said to be 'sleeping on the ground'; for personification of plants and animals as a literary device see Introduction 8.1.

533 **ῥάδικας:** Nic. is the only poet who uses the word ῥάδιξ, with which he indicates a root or frond (cf. *Al.* 57, 331); the meaning 'branch' only applies to *Ther.* 378, and to D.S. 2.53, which is the only other known instance of the word. According to Σ *Ther.* 533b the word refers to οἱ ἀπὸ φοινίκων κλάδοι, but is used wrongly by Nic. (νῦν δὲ καταχρηστικῶς κέχρηται τῇ λέξει). The scholiast, however, may well have the passage in Diodorus in mind, which implies a more strict usage than is necessary for Nic.

Could the word be a borrowing from Latin? As there is no parallel or earlier instance of ῥάδιξ it seems as if Nic. is the first to introduce the noun, perhaps as another learned lexical innovation, although of a different nature. According to Chantraine (964), however, the suffix -ιξ for plant names is not unique (σπάδιξ, σκάνδιξ), which makes a borrowing from Latin less likely.

534 **ἄγρει:** in Homer the verb, always at line-opening, is only used in the imperat., where it means 'come on!' rather than the literal 'take (it)!' (Russo etc. 1992, 116), usually preceding a second imperat. (Kirk 1990, 137), a usage imitated in A.R. 1.487. The sg. imperat. is otherwise rare (Archil. 4.8 *IEG*$^2$, also at line-opening, seems to be the only instance), which makes a Homeric borrowing of the form more likely. Nic., however, has reversed the Homeric meaning by using it in the literal sense of 'take', without a second imperat., thus renewing Homer's language by reversal of sense, here and in 594, 630, 685 and 879. See Introduction 7.3

**ἀσφοδέλοιο:** 'asphodel'.

**διανθέος:** not a poetic usage, but a factual description of the inflorescence of the asphodel, i.e. 'double-flowering', 'with a twofold flower'; cf. Thphr. *HP* 1.13.2.

**ἄλλοτε:** for the particular use of ἄλλοτε, here and in 535 see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

535 **καυλεῖον:** see 75 n.

537 **ἑλξίνην:** 'helxine'.

538 **ὕδασι τερπομένην**: the personification of a plant 'delighting in water' is used in 60–62, of the καλάμινθος. Here we find the same literary device, albeit phrased in a different way; see Introduction 8.1.

**ἰάμνοις**: see 30 n.

539 **κοτυλήρυτον**: a clear instance of the reuse of a Homeric *unicum*. The word is only found in *Il.* 23.43, πάντῃ δ' ἀμφὶ νέκυν κοτυλήρυτον ἔρρεεν αἷμα, 'and everywhere around the corpse flowed blood, of which one could draw cups', based on κοτύλη and ἀρύω; cf. *LfgrE*, 'viel, eimerweise'. According to Aristarchus the idea was that the blood was so abundant that one could easily draw multiple cups from it, but Leaf and Mazon have argued that actual cups were taken as a gift for the dead man, compared to offerings like in *Od.* 10.535 ff. and E. *Hec.* 534–538; Kirk & Richardson 1993, 169. Nic. uses the curious word literally, in an entirely different context, of taking a cupful (κοτύλη, 0,27 litre) of either vinegar (ὄξος) or wine; see Introduction 7.3. The odd Homeric expression was also signalled by the poet of fr. 773 Pf., where the Homeric combination is reworked to κυλικήρυτον αἷμα.

540 **ῥέα δ' αὖτε … ἀλύξεις**: additions like these make us wonder why Nic. would bother to mention vinegar and wine first, if water, which is likely to be more readily available to anyone bitten by a snake, will do the trick as well. One could argue that the use of vinegar and wine is more effective to counter envenomation, but Nic. clearly states that water gives just as good a result (ῥέα) in escaping death. The main reason for the inclusion of both alternatives may lie in the picture Nic. is painting of himself here: a learned man who truly knows all about different sorts of cures, and whose knowledge is complete and not merely partial or superficial. In this way he plays the game of presenting himself as a medical expert to the fullest; for other instances of Nic.'s attempt to *sound* like a true scientist see Introduction 8.2. Alternatively it can be suggested that the juxtaposition of water and wine is to be interpreted metapoetically: the image of pure water representing the best poetry is found in Call. *Ap.* 110–112, and has been suggested for fr. 1.33 Harder from the *Aetia*-prologue; for the image of pure water in Call. see the references in Cameron 1995, 363–366, and Asper 1997, 112–120.

### *541–549 Alcibius' Bugloss*

After the treatment of only a single compound remedy the poet proceeds to inform his audience about a plant known as Alcibius' bugloss, a herb with particular curative qualities. The passage not only contains an aetiology on the

plant's name, inserting the topos of the πρῶτος εὑρετής again (see 500 n.), but at the same time plays with the etymology of the plant's proper name, viz. ἔχιον, which is explained implicitly as having earned its name because of its ability to counter the effects of the bite of an ἔχις. The 'story' of the otherwise unknown Alcibius, who, after having been bitten by a snake, instantly pulled this root out of the ground and sucked out the juice, spreading the remains on the wound, is told in the same succint and elliptic manner as previous narratives, such as the story of the loss of Youth (see 351 n.), Paieon and the dragon (438–440), and the discovery of *centaury* by Cheiron (500–501). Apart from an echo of the threshing-floor (cf. 114), the passage is not only reminiscent of the assault on the sleeping Canobus (309–315), but is in fact its counterpart: the helmsman Canobus dies of envenomation, not knowing how to counter its effects, but Alcibius, finding himself in the same predicament, manages to survive. Thus, the story of Alcibius, compared to the negative example of Canobus, underlines the value of the poet's lessons. See Introduction 8.3 and 666 n.

541 **ἐσθλήν ... ῥίζαν:** for the *hyperbaton* see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8.

**Ἀλκιβίου ἔχιος:** the excellent root 'of Alcibius' bugloss'. Unlike the periphrastic 'root of Cheiron', poetically circumscribing the herb known as centaury in 501, here the poet seems to refer to the root of a plant that is actually called ἔχις, 'bugloss'. The *terminus technicus* used by later authors, however, is not ἔχις but ἔχιον (Dsc. 4.27, Plin. *Nat.* 25.104 has *echios*). Nic.'s Ἀλκιβίου ἔχις therefore seems to be a poetic rendering, chosen to play with the homonymic ἔχις, which up till now always referred to a snake, and to introduce the figure of Alcibius. The latter is otherwise unknown (except for another plant connected to his name in 666, see n.) but figures here clearly as another instance of a πρῶτος εὑρετής, enabling the poet to expand on the aetiology connected to the plant's name and effect; for the topos see 500 n. and Introduction 8.3.

**περιφράζεο:** 'learn about', rather than 'consider, think about'; see 7 n. Schneider (1962, 12–13) points out that φράζεο is Nic.'s equivalent of Aratus' σκέπτεο (75, 778, 799, 832 etc.). The latter is of course of less use to Nic.'s rational instructions than to Aratus, who actually asks his pupil to look at the sky. Nevertheless both verbs serve the same purpose, viz. attracting the attention of the addressee once again at the start of a new section. See Introduction 5.10 and 6.10.

542 **περιτέτροφε χαίτῃ:** an elegant variant of περιδέδρομε χαίτῃ in 503, also at line-end. For *variatio* as a primary characteristic of Nic.'s aesthetics see Introduction 6.10.

543 **λείριον:** flower of the ἔχις in 541; Gow 1951, 104.

546 **ἄντλῳ ἐνυπνώοντα ... ἀλωός:** the line recalls two earlier passages in the poem: 114, where ἄντλος is used in the same rare meaning of 'heap of corn' and where reference is made to threshing (ἀλώϊα ἔργα), like it is here (παρὰ τέλσον ἅλωος); 309–315, where the helmsman Canobus incurred the same fate as Alcibius, viz. being attacked by a snake when sleeping.

**παρὰ τέλσον ἅλωος:** 'at the margin of a threshing-floor'. τέλσον is normally used of the edge of a field (the so-called 'headland'), to indicate the place where the plough turns at the end of a furrow, thus showing the land's edge, but only in the combination τέλσον ἀρούρης (*Il.* 13.707, 18.544, 547). The only other instance before Nic. is A.R. 3.412, in the variant ἐπὶ τέλσον ἀρότρῳ at line-end, where the word is aptly used for the task of ploughing Jason has been assigned. Nic. learnedly takes the abstracted meaning 'edge' from the Homeric context and applies it to a threshing-floor, viz. to a similar setting of agriculture, but stripped of the original context of turning ploughs, of which the word shows etymological derivation (τέλος, πολέω, see Janko 1992, 136). For such reuse of Homer see Introduction 7.3.

547 **εἶθαρ:** 'at once', 'forthwith', a Homerism (only in the *Iliad*, 9×) popular among Hellenistic poets ([Theoc.] 25.213, Call. fr. 31c.1 Harder (31b Pf.), A.R. 2.408, 3.1313, 4.1606, *Al.* 517), but not found in other poetry or prose until Quintus in the fourth century CE.

548 **ἕρκεϊ θρύψεν ὀδόντων:** an evident borrowing from Homer (*Il.* 4.350, 14.83, *Od.* 23.70 et al.), although the expression does not seem to have been as classic as it were to become in later history (Sol. 27.1 *IEG*$^2$ = 23 Gentili-Prato seems to be the only imitation before Nic.). Nic. has, however, reworked the combination, which only comes as a fixed phrase in Homer (viz. either ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων or ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων), turning it into chewing; Homeric diction is ample in Nic. poetry, but there is little room for speech. For reversal within Nic.'s intertextuality see Introduction 7.3.

549 **πέσκος:** apparently a unique variant of πέκος/πόκος, 'skin'. Morever, the noun is used metaphorically of the plant's skin as if it were an animal's hide or fleece, thus creating an odd sort of 'personification', portraying a plant as an animal; cf. Introduction 8.1.

### *550–556 Horehound*

After the root of Alcibius another simple is treated. Of the horehound (πράσιον) Nic. not only tells us how to use it as a cure for snakebites, but also how it can be of use to herdsmen who have trouble with loveless cows that do not want to give their offspring milk. An intertextual reference reminds the reader of a similar situation in the ninth book of the *Odyssey*, but Nic. uses the context to reverse the image triggered by the Homeric allusion. The explanation of the use of the horehound shifts to two other names by which the plant is known, with Nic. clarifying these alternative designations as being related to the bees that surround them.

550 **πρασίοιο:** 'horehound'.

**ὀλόψας:** a rare verb only found among Hellenistic poets and their imitator Nonnus. ὀλόπτω, 'pluck out', 'tear out' is normally only used when applied to real hair, Euph. *SH* 415 ii.16 (24c Van Groningen = 26 Lightfoot), Call. *Dian.* 77, fr. 573 Pf. (ὠλόψατο χαίτας) and Antip. Sid. *AP* 7.241.5 = *HE* 342 (ὠλόψατο χαίταν). Instances like the last two may have induced Nic. to extend the metaphor of χαίτη for hair (cf. 60, 65, 503, 523, 542, and 92 n.) to the use of the verb ὀλόπτω for stripping leaves of a plant. In 595 the verb is used for cutting out the pith of a stalk.

551 **χραισμήσεις:** see 576 n. In the *Iliad* (no occurrences in the *Odyssey*) the verb ('to ward off', 'to be a protection for') is always used with a negative, expressed or implied (*LfgrE*). The first use in a positive clause is A.R. 2.249, as is Nic.'s use here of this Homeric verb.

552 **ἥ τε καὶ ἀστόργοιο … μόσχου:** the comment made by Nic. on the special qualities of the horehound (πράσιον) does not seem to serve a particular purpose. Maybe the teacher wants to show off his knowledge of the non-snakerelated qualities of plants too. The idea seems to be that this plant triggers a reaction on the udder of a cow (κατείρυσεν, 'draws down'), causing it to be able to give milk, even if the cow does not want to do this at first, being ἄστοργος towards her first-born (πρωτογόνου), understood as a *genitivus objectivus*. At first sight μόσχου seems to go with ἀστόργοιο, but in the next line the addressee realizes that it goes with πρωτογόνου.

553 **στέργει:** echoing ἀστόργοιο in the previous line, to which this clause is complementary. For other instances of such use of the *figura etymologica* see Introduction 6.6.

**περισφαραγεῦσα**: the act. is only found here, but the verb seems to be borrowed from *Od.* 9.440, οὔθατα γὰρ σφαραγεῦντο, of Polyphemus' unmilked sheep, their udders full to bursting with milk. Capping Homer, Nic. has enhanced the rare verb σφαραγεύω (the only other instance of which is *Od.* 9.330, although used in a different context altogether) by using a unique compound. Here we have another example of an intertextual reference (see Introduction 7.3) where Nic. creates an opposition between his text and the context that is recalled by the allusion: in Homer's pretext the sheep are almost bursting with milk, yet there is no remedy for their plight as the Cyclops has been blinded and is unable to take care of his flock. In Nic. it is not the excess of milk, but the lack of it that vexes the young. But after the mother has been treated—by means of the specialist knowledge offered by the poet—the calf's plight is over and we find περισφαραγεῦσα used in a positive sense.

554 **ἐπικλείουσιν**: for the word-pattern see 230 n. For the use of such denominating verbs as devices to call attention to wordplay and etymology cf. O'Hara 1996, 10–11 with notes.

**βοτῆρες**: cf. βουκαῖος (5), βούτης (74), νομέες (48, 473, 898) and ἀμορβοί (49). Nic.'s meticulous pursuit of *variatio* has brought about another variant to the previous four. For *variatio* see Introduction 6.10. βοτῆρες does appear as a v.l. in Euph. *CA* 96.3, p. 47.

556 **μέλιτος**: although the etymological relation to μελίφυλλον and μελίκταιναν is so obvious it does not need to be pointed out, Nic. dutifully explains the connection nonetheless, as he does frequently (e.g. 359/369, 411/412, 508, 637/642); cf. O'Hara 1996, 40–41 and Introduction 6.6.

### *557–563 Chicken-Brain, Field Basil, Marjoram, Boar's Liver*

After Alcibius' bugloss and horehound Nic. returns to compound recipes, following his original plan (see 528–540 n.). The following compounds consist of both herbs and animal parts. The catalogue of ingredients not only sounds farfetched, consisting of chicken's brain and a boar's liver, but is also constructed loosely as it does not tell the reader exactly which ingredient is best, whether they should *all* be used, or whether they are interchangeable or not. For such notions of impreciseness, ultimately leading to serious doubts about Nic.'s professional background, see Introduction 1.3.

558 **κατοικάδος:** a poetic fem. for the adj. κατοικίδιος. For similar unique formations in -ας cf. 131 (θουράς), 210 (παυράς) and 519 (κιρράς); see Introduction 6.2.

**ἄλλοτ':** see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9. The appearance of ἄλλοτε here, and ἤ in 559, makes Nic.'s proposed recipe problematic: if we are to infer that pared field basil and marjoram have the same effect as the lobe of a boar's liver, why then would anyone resort to the latter ingredient, complicated to obtain as it is? On the other hand, if all ingredients need to be put together, as is suggested by τὰ μὲν ἄρ σύμμικτα πιεῖν in 562, it is hard to see how these disjunctive particles can be understood.

559 **πολύκνημον:** 'field basil'.

**ὀρίγανον:** 'marjoram'.

560–561 **ἥπατος ἀκρότατον … | … πυλάων:** unlike the prescriptions of previous curative elements, the indication of the part of the liver needed here is very precise. We get the impression that only a specialist would know how to pinpoint the 'table' (τραπέζης) or the 'portal fissures' (πυλάων) on a boar's liver. This leads to the assumption that the internal addressee Hermesianax is a doctor after all, although it can be suggested that such knowledge was related to haruspicy, and therefore not as esoteric as we may think. Nic. seems to include these details to show his vast knowledge, which is not limited to snakebites. His strikingly detailed knowledge of the structure of the liver thus adds to the stance adopted, portraying himself as a man of wide learning.

### *564–573 Cypress, All-Heal, Testicle of a Beaver, Testicle of a River-Horse*

Another compound recipe employing various animal parts, viz. the testicle of a beaver (565) or that of a hippopotamus (566). The introduction of the latter leads in a six line excursus on the nature, habitat and feeding-habits of the river-horse, wreaking havoc upon the ploughlands of Egypt (566–571). Although the excursus is not functional from a didactic point of view, its exotic imagery creates an appealing break from the lacklustre enumerations of ingredients which make up this part of the poem.

564 **φόβην:** another instance of the metaphorical use of hair for foliage (cf. χαίτη in 60, 65 and 503), although not an original one, e.g. S. *Ant.* 419, E. *Alc.* 172, *Ba.* 684; the usage is quite common.

**κυπαρίσσου:** ‘cypress’.

**565 πάνακες:** not ‘a panacea’ like the one discovered by Cheiron, but probably the plant formally known by that name; see Spatafora 2007a, 149 and Strömberg 1940, 37 and 98. Cf. πανάκειον (with 508 n.) and πανάκτειον in 626.

**κάστορος οὐλοὸν ὄρχιν:** in antiquity secretions of the beaver, used in medicine, were thought to be a product of the animal’s testicles (Dsc. 2.24, Plin. *Nat.* 32.27). In fact this secretion, known as *castoreum*, is produced by a gland somewhere near the groin. This medicinal use lives on in this day and age as the secretion has curative qualities indeed; the acid contained in *castoreum* is in fact one of the components of aspirin. For the prophylactic qualities of the substance, as mentioned by later authors see Spatafora 2007a, 149–150. Nic.’s indication of the testicle as being οὐλοός refers to a popular belief that the beaver would bite off its own testicles when cornered, expecting to be released once the hunter obtained what he was after, viz. the powerful testicles.[13] According to Gow & Scholfield (1953, 181) “Nic.’s adj. does not necessarily imply the second belief [viz. the self-castration], but it was widespread”; cf. Aelian (*NA* 6.34), who describes the same fantastic phenomenon. As the ancient belief was that the beaver could *save* itself by castration, the adj. οὐλοόν can in fact not refer to the beaver’s automutilation. The act, unpleasant as it may have been, was after all thought to be *not* fatal. Gow & Scholfield are therefore right in suggesting that the ὄρχις is fatal to the beaver because its testicles are wanted, causing the beaver to be continually threatened to be hunted and killed by those who are after its testicles.

**566–567 ἢ ἵππου τὸν Νεῖλος … | βόσκει:** perhaps Nic. proceeds with the river-horse through association and considers the animal to be a large version of the beaver, thus attributing the same curative qualities to its testicles. According to the first-century CE author Dioscorides (2.23) ὄρχις ἱπποποτάμου ξηρανθεὶς καὶ λειανθεὶς πίνεται μετ’ οἴνου πρὸς ἑρπετῶν δήγματα, but it is likely that he got his information from Nic.’s *Theriaca*; cf. Plin. *Nat.* 28.121, *testiculi drachma ex aqua*

13 This popular belief is well attested in Medieval bestiaries (e.g. Van Maerlant’s *Der Naturen Bloeme*), where several illustrations show beavers biting off their testicles (Den Haag KB: 76 E 4, *Der Naturen Bloeme*, fol. 12$^r$; KA XVI, *Der Naturen Bloeme*, fol. 49$^v$, MMW, 10 B 25, *Bestiarium*, fol. 6$^v$). The odd wolf-like shapes of the beavers depicted there betray a lack of factual knowledge of the animals shown by the painter that reminds one of some of Nic.’s descriptions of fictitious animals, such as the dragon (438) and the basilisk (396).

*contra serpentes bibitur*, who may likewise be indebted tot Nic. Whether or not the hippopotamus' testicles were actually thought to have any effect in countering snakebites or not, the instruction remains unpractical to say the least. Whereas the testicles of a beaver can be imagined to be obtained somehow, albeit with some difficulty—particularly for a victim in distress—, Nic. can hardly be taken seriously here as a teacher instructing his internal addressee and pupil to get himself a pair of testicles of a river-horse. Regardless of the danger involved (cf. 99 n.), one wonders how any victim in the haunted region of e.g. Thrace (458 ff.) would be able to come by one of them.

Rather than taking Nic. at face value here, the introduction of the river-horse should be considered an opportunity to add an exotic digression on an animal that must have made quite an impression on both the author and his readers, whether he had actually ever seen one, or had just heard stories about it. Moreover, if Nic. has an Alexandrian audience in mind, as is suggested by his frequent references to Egyptian matters (cf. 313 n.), such information on typically Egyptian particulars could be considered an attempt to please his external addressee.

**ὑπὲρ Σάϊν:** Saïs is the name of both a district and a town on one of the branches of the Nile, not far (about 16 kilometres) from Naucratis. The name may well have sounded familiar to Nic.'s readers, as city and region are mentioned by Herodotus (book 2, *passim*) and Plato (*Ti.* 21e).

**αἰθαλόεσσαν:** the adj. is used only in poetry, always concerned with burning (Hes. *Th.* 72, 504, 854, A.R. 4.597, of a κεραυνός), or its result, viz. smoke (A.R. 4.139), soot (*Il.* 2.415, 18.22, *Od.* 22.239, Theoc. 13.13, A.R. 4.118), or ashes (*Od.* 24.316). Here the poet uses the adj. simply as a poetic variant of 'dark' or 'black', without a connotation of fire, as is clear from 174–175, where a certain variety of the asp is said to be αἰθαλόεσσα μελαινομένῃ ὑπὸ βώλῳ | Αἰθιόπων; cf. 716.

567 **κακὴν … ἅρπην:** the sickle is used metaphorically of the hippopotamus' jaw (not tooth; see Swift 2011), which ruins the fertile soil of the ploughlands of Saïs. Perhaps Nic. had Hes. *Th.* 179 in mind, where ἅρπην is found in the same *sedes* at line-end (elsewhere only in A.R. 4.987 and *Al.* 103). There it is used of an actual sickle that is destructive of fertility as well, albeit in a different context, of the castration of Cronus.

568 **ζάλον εἰλυόεντα:** the noun ζάλος is not found elsewhere. Σ *Ther.* 568 explains the word as τὸ βορβορῶδες κῦμα; for the description of Egypt's river water as being muddy see 203 n.

**569** **χιλοὶ ὅτε χλοάουσι:** 'when the fodder is green', a poetic periphrasis of spring, with the alliteration of χ, λ and ο. If one follows Gow & Scholfield's suggestion, the description is augmented by the νεός (fallow-land) that is said to cause the grass to root; one would, however, rather expected νειός, following Hesiod and Homer. The stress on the beauty of the fresh green land enhances the contrast with the destructive hippopotamus, which is pictured as ruining all this natural beauty.

**570** **ἐπιστείβων:** see 32 n.

**βυθόν:** somewhat of a poetic exaggeration, as the noun calls images of deep seas and abysses to mind, e.g. A. *Pr.* 432, *Ch.* 507, Theoc. 11.62, 22.17, A.R. 4.887. The use of the word as 'depth' in a context of rural land is an innovation of the poet since the application of βυθός to a track is not found elsewhere.

**ὀσσάτιον:** a rare epic lengthening of ὅσος (only found here and in *Il.* 5.758, A.R. 1.372 and 468) which continues the grandiose style of the preceding βυθός.

**571** **παλίσσυτον ὄγμον ἐλαύνων:** the metaphorical presentation of the hippopotamus' jaw as a sickle (ἅρπη) is kept up as the animal is portrayed as a rustic mower, cutting off the plants in straight order, following a furrow (cf. Theoc. 10.2), and turning at the headland to start with the next furrow in *boustrophedon* style, which seems to be the meaning of παλίσσυτον here. However, the portrayal of the hippopotamus' behaviour itself is not a simile in which the animal is compared to someone who follows the mower's furrow, as the animal literally follows the order of the furrows, ravaging the plants that have been grown in them; cf. Arat. 749, μέγαν ὄγμον ἐλαύνων, said of the movements of the sun throughout the year, following a distinct pattern, where the image is used metaphorically, unlike Nic.'s use here. The image seems to be a reversal of a Homeric simile in *Il.* 11.67–69, οἳ δ', ὥς τ' ἀμητῆρες ἐναντίοι ἀλλήλοισιν | ὄγμον ἐλαύνωσιν ἀνδρὸς μάκαρος κατ' ἄρουραν | πυρῶν ἢ κριθῶν. But whereas in Homer the mowers work their way down the furrow of the field of a happy man, the hippopotamus, performing the same acts in its own way, causes nothing but ruin, hence its 'sickle' is called κακήν in 567; cf. Swift 2011.

**572** **ἀποπροταμών:** borrowed from cf. *Od.* 8.475, νώτου ἀποπροταμών, ἐπὶ δὲ πλεῖον ἐλέλειπτο, being the only other instance of the verb, and used in the sames *sedes*. The Homeric line shows Odysseus cutting off a piece of a boar's chine, in order for the piece to be given to Demodocus. As often Nic. borrows

a word or phrase from Homer and reuses it in an entirely different context, although the acts described in Homer and Nic. are usually similar. Here the image of cutting off choice pieces of meat from a killed animal, in a setting of a pleasant meal is turned into a medical operation where the hippopotamus' testicles—pieces of choice meat in an entirely different vein—are removed to be part of a prophylactic recipe. For the technique of allusion see Introduction 7.3.

573 **ἐμπίσαιο:** see 624 n. and Introduction 6.10.

### *574–582 Wormwood, Bay, Sweet Marjoram, Curd, Animal Parts*

After the exotic ingredients of the previous passage, Nic. seems to start a new recipe, again consisting of plants and ingredients begotten from animals. This section is, however, hardly anything more than a loose enumeration of ingredients, lacking overall detail with regard to the exact composition of the cure.

574 **Μηδὲ σύ γ':** see 63 n.

**ἀβροτόνου:** 'wormwood'.

**ἐπιλήθεο:** possibly Nic. is thinking of Hes. *Op.* 275, *καί νυ δίκης ἐπάκουε, βίης δ' ἐπιλήθεο πάμπαν*, the only previous instance of this imperat. Hesiod tells his internal addressee Perses to forget about violence and to start paying attention. Nic. has turned the image into a negation. The addressee similarly needs to pay attention to his teacher, but now by *not* forgetting about a particular item.

**δάφνης:** 'bay'.

575 **ἀμάρακος:** 'sweet marjoram'.

576 **χραισμήεις:** 'useful as protection'. As Spatafora (2007a, 151) points out, a coined adj. derived from the Homeric verb χραισμέω ('ward off', 'be a protection'), implying a context of battle or physical threat (*LfgrE*), e.g. *Il.* 1.28, 3.54. The verb is used by Nic. as well in 551, 643, 914 and 926. In Nic.'s world, where there is very little room for divine intervention, the verb and its cognates lost the overtone of divine aid, although the implicit certainty of effectiveness is retained. For this coinage, another adj. in -εις, see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2. A second coinage derived from the verb is χραίσμη (583, plur. in 852).

**πρασιῇς τε καὶ ἀνδήροισι:** a πρασιή is a garden plot (cf. *Od.* 24.247, of Laertes' kitchen-garden). The relation to πράσον tells us it is properly a bed of leeks (the -ίη suffix turns πράσον into a collective; Heubeck 1992, 390), but already in *Od.* 7.127–128 the noun is used for various kinds of garden-beds (πρασιαί … | παντοῖαι). This is the first reference in the *Theriaca* to a dedicated kitchen-garden, instead of vales, glades and water-meadows where particular ingredients are to be found. Cf. 879 n.

577 **τάμισον:** 'curd' or 'rennet', a recurring ingredient; see 711 and 949.

**σκίνακος:** 'nimbly moving', only here and in *Al.* 67. As Reece (2009, 69) points out it is probably related to the Hesychian glosses κίνδαξ and κινδαύει. Although the adj. is of course appropriate for a hare, the unique but otherwise uninformative epithet stands out in a passage where the hare is only mentioned for its curd, and not for its speed. As such the adj. can clearly be considered as belonging to the epic style. Both the epithet, surprising because is does not fit logically into the description of the hare's addition into the catalogue, and the bouncing rhythm, created by the holodactylic line, imitating the running of the hare, decorate the line.

578 **προκός:** a Homeric gloss (*Od.* 17.295) previously discussed by Philitas fr. 48 Spanoudakis (= 20 Dettori = Σ A.R. 2.279a) and used by Apollonius (2.279); cf. Rengakos 1994, 133–134. Although Nic. presents the animal as evidently distinct from a νεβρός, and gives us the impression that it is clear to which animal he is referring, the actual identification was apparently problematic for previous authors, which makes Nic.'s statement suspicious. According to Philitas fr. 48 Spanoudakis a πρόξ is a first-born ἔλαφος (Φιλήτας δέ φησι πρόκας λέγεσθαι ἐλάφους τὰς πρώτως τικτομένας, οἷον πρωτοτόκους), but the very fact that the meaning of the word needed to be pointed out by a scholar suggests it cannot have been easily recognised. According to Bulloch (1985a, 202) the word had possibly become obsolete by the third century BCE and "became part of the Hellenistic poetic language … even though scholarly opinion of the meaning of the word varied". For discussion of the relation between the various terms (πρόξ, ἔλαφος, δορκάς, νεβρός) see Bulloch (cited above), Cuypers 1997, 287, and Spanoudakis 2002, 373–374.

579–580 **τὸ μὲν ἄρ καλέουσιν ἐχῖνον, | … κεκρύφαλον:** for the formulaic diction cf. Call. *Hec.* fr. 117 H., and fr. inc. sed. 177 H. ὅν τε μάλιστα βοῶν ποθέουσιν ἐχῖνοι. Again we see learned details of a particular organ; cf. the boar's liver in 559–560. Nic. gives the impression that the stag's paunch (νηδύν, not a very precise

indication) is known under different names, but the ἐχῖνος is in fact a separate stomach (the third, LSJ s.v. ἐχῖνος IV), 'the container' (from ἔχω, Spatafora 2007a, 152), whereas κεκρύφαλος ('snood') is designated by Aristotle as the second stomach of ruminating animals. Unless these alternative names—and the parts they indicate—were known from gastronomy, Nic. is playing his role as a learned teacher again, while providing little practical help to his reader.

**ἐγκατόεντα:** only here; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

581 **δραχμάων:** see 102 n.

582 **μέθυος πολιοῦ:** for μέθυ see 507 n. According to the scholiast either 'old' or 'white' wine; Σ *Ther.* 592a ἀντὶ τοῦ παλαιοῦ ἢ λευκοῦ. Both Gow & Scholfield and Jacques translate the former, although a choice is difficult to make, considering the range of meanings carried by πολιός, viz. designations of specific colour ('grey', 'white'), appearance ('bright', 'clear', of ἔαρ, αἰθήρ and ἠήρ), and derived meanings like 'old' (through the meaning 'grey-haired') and 'venerable' (because of age, as indicated by grey hair). Alternatively to the colour or the age of the wine, as indicated by Σ, Nic. may be referring to 'clear' or 'bright' wine, which perhaps points at filtering to obtain clear wine. Although the interpretion of 'old wine' is in essence metaphorical, apportioning a predominantly human physical quality (i.e. being considered old as a result of turning grey at a certain age) to an object which is not subject to the same process, Nic.'s use does not seem to be evidently poetical. Incidentally it may well be connected with the next line, where we find the homonymous plant πόλιον. The combination μέθυος πολιοῦ, however, may be synonymous to the combination παλαισταγέος οἴνοιο in 591, in which case both combinations refer to old wine.

### *583–587 Hulwort, Cedar, Juniper, Plane, Bishop's Weed, Stag's Scrotum, Cypress*

Another enumeration of ingredients, varying from plants to animal parts, like the previous passages. This short passage is primarily concerned with giving a list, but a colourful adj. in 584 offers a glimpse of a pastoral scene, showing Nic.'s delicate eye for detail, and his awareness of possibilities to create some diversion, albeit little, from strictly summing up his data.

583 **Μηδὲ σέ ... λάθοι:** the sort of counsel one would expect in didactic poetry, echoing Hesiod's similar advice in *Op.* 491, μηδέ σε λήθοι. The combination does not seem to be used elsewhere, apart from a few instances in tragedy (Eur. *Med.* 332, Ζεῦ, μὴ λάθοι σε; S. *OT* 904–905, Ζεῦ, πάντ' ἀνάσσων, μὴ λάθοι | σέ), and *AP*

7.358 (adesp.), μή σε λάθοι Νέμεσις. It is interesting that the tragic instances are both aimed at Zeus, a marked contrast with the down-to-earth addresses to Perses (*Op.* 491) and Hermesianax/the general you here.

**χραίσμη:** 'succour', a Nicandrean coinage only found here and in 852 (plur.); see 576 n.

**πολίου:** 'hulwort', here and in 64. The likeness to πολιοῦ ('grey') in the previous line is too obvious to be accidental, considering Nic.'s keen eye for variation and his scrupulous avoidance of repetition. The poet's wish to create this *paronomasia* may have induced him to use the adj. πολιός in 582, disregarding the possible confusion the word could cause, as is clear from the scholia; see 582 n.

**κέδροιο:** 'cedar'.

584 **ἀρκευθίς:** 'juniper', an effective ingredient against snakes indeed, as is clear from Medea's use of a juniper sprig to lull the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece to sleep in A.R. 4.156–158. There are no signs, however, that Nic. has this particular scene in the *Argonautica* in mind here, nor is anything said about the magical-ritual use of the juniper; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 152.

**σφαῖραι:** it is hard to decide whether we are to consider σφαῖραί ('catkins') as a technical term (which it came to be in later authors, e.g. Dsc. 1.79, 2.179, Cleom. 1.10, possibly going back to Nic.), or a poetic periphrasis of the particular inflorescence of this plant.

**θερειλεχέος πλατάνοιο:** a plane tree 'for sleeping under in summer' (LSJ), or 'that invites to sleep in summer' (Gow & Scholfield); only here. The adj. unexpectedly brings us back to the topic of sleep, which is addressed often in earlier parts of the poem, of humans (25, 56, 58, 78, 90, 313, 546), of animals (31–34, 125, 162, 165, 198, 283) and even of plants (532). Its use here, brief as it may be, serves to call a pastoral image to mind, reminiscent of e.g. Hes. *Op.* 593 and the opening scene of Theocritus' first idyll, but also of *Ther.* 473. The plane, with its broad foliage, is particularly known for its pleasant qualities for those seeking shade to rest, cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 230b2. In Nic.'s world, however, looming danger is never far away, as in *Ther.* 23–30 we were told that sleeping out in the open can be particularly dangerous.

585 **βουπλεύρου:** 'bishop's weed'.

**Ἰδαίης κυπαρίσσου:** according to Σ *Ther.* 585d poets tend to use the adj. as a poetical appellative for any mountain, ἢ Τρωϊκῆς ἢ ὀρεινῆς. πᾶν γὰρ ὄρος Ἴδη κατὰ τοὺς ποιητάς. The association of the cypress with Mount Ida on Crete is, however, already found in Thphr. *HP* 3.2.6, οἷον ἐν τῇ Κρήτῃ τὰ Ἰδαῖα· κυπάριττος γὰρ ἐκεῖ.

586 **πηρῖνα θοραίην:** although the reference is to the stag's scrotum itself, rather than its contents, the instruction seems to be a variant of the earlier precepts to add a beaver's testicles or those of a hippopotamus as ingredients (566–567). Previous editors felt uncomfortable about this line, as it does not seem to fit here. J. Schneider suspected a lacuna and placed this line after 582, while Gow & Scholfield placed it after 578. Their relocations of the line instantly solve the problem with the dangling part. in the ms reading ταμών. Jacques changed the part. ταμών to ταμεῖν (with an alternatively suggestion of τάμοις) and rightly replaces the line to its original position. This creates a mixed enumeration of plants and ingredients begotten from animals, not unlike the previous 'mixed passages' 557–573 and 574–582, and the following passage 599–624; see Spatafora 2007a, 153. The use of the *eta* for the *epsilon* in πηρῖνα is less common; cf. περίνος (Hp. *Art.* 71) and περῖνα as reconstucted by Löffler (1999, 36) for Hippon. fr. 78.14 *IEG*$^2$ (= Degani).

587 **ἀθέσφατον … μόγον:** a distinctly poetic turn of phrase. Although the verb μογέω occurs quite frequently from Homer on, the noun μόγος is very rare: in *Il.* 4.27 the meaning is 'toil', but Nic.'s use of the word for 'suffering' (cf. 428) is closer to the only other instance of the word in S. *OC* 1744, 'trouble, distress'. The physicality of the kind of distress described by Nic. gives the word a more concrete charge (i.e. ultimately death), which is reinforced by the adj. ἀθέσφατον. To call suffering from envenomation ἀθέσφατος does not only underline the horror of the conditions described, but seems extra poignant when used by Nic., who is in fact very able at describing indescribable suffering.

**ἐκ … ὤσει:** the countering of suffering from envenomation by means of remedies is described in a distinctly visual manner, reminiscent of battle (see Introduction 8.8): the suffering is literally thrust out by force, like one thrusts a sword. The use of the third person act. is significant: all the victim needs to do is pay attention to this teacher's lessons and prepare himself a remedy. Once this has been administered the cure will push out the suffering by itself, as an active agent.

### *588–593 Helxine, Barley Gruel, Olive Oil*

Another recipe. Despite the lack of appeal of the tedious and largely monotonous lists of ingredients per se, the poet has moulded the material in such a way that even the dullest recipe has some points of interest. Here we find a *hendiadys* (588), some lexical rarities (589), two unique compound adj.'s, probably coined for the occasion (591, 593), in addition to the usual adaptation of regular words to the morphology of epic language.

588 **θανάτου φύξιν τε καὶ ἀλκήν:** virtually a *hendiadys*, expressing escape from death *by* protection.

589 **κουλυβάτειαν:** not found elsewhere; this may be a Nicandrean embellishment of the plant known as κλύβατις (cf. 537 and Dsc. 4.85), a variety of helxine.

**τροχαλῷ δ' ἐνὶ λίγδῳ:** 'in a round mortar'. A λίγδος, probably related to the less rare synonym ἴγδη/ἴγδις (explained by Poll. 10.103, quoting Sol. 39 *IEG*$^2$ = 33 Gentili-Prato) is only found previously in S. fr. 35 *TrGF*. Nic.'s seems to be varying, by means of a learned synonym, on θυεία, which was used for a mortar in 91.

590 **πτισάνοιο:** 'barley-gruel'. Nic. has changed the regular πτισάνη into the unique neut. πτισάνον. Coining words by adding new endings or shifting gender are methods frequently applied by the poet to create rare—and thus more poetic—vocabulary; see Introduction 6.2.

591 **παλαισταγέος:** a unique adj., decorating the wine with a high-flown compound: 'pressed long ago', viz. 'of ancient vintage' (Gow & Scholfield); Σ *Ther.* 591c simply gives παλαιοῦ. The combination παλαισταγέος οἴνοιο is practically synonymous to μέθυος πολιοῦ in 582, as both expressions seem to refer simply to old wine (unless πολιοῦ does not refer to age, see 582 n.). Nic. has thus found a way to avoid repetition by a double synonym, adding another refined element to the lofty tone of the poem, if not to its contents.

592 **ἀργέσταο:** like πολιός in 582, ἀργηστής is used here both for colour (white) and appearance (bright, shining). Here the adj. clearly refers to the gleaming appearance of the olive-oil. The line is reminiscent of 105, but considering Nic.'s regard for variation, no plain imitation is to be expected and the line is elegantly reworked. The adj. is found twice in Homer (*Il.* 11.306, 21.334) to qualify νότος, the south wind, explained by the ancient critics as either λευκός or ταχύς, both as

interpretations of ἀργός; see Rengakos 1994, 55–56. Here Nic. has extrapolated the meaning 'bright' from its original context in order to present his readers with a learned synonym for ἀργός in a new context.

**λίπευς:** for the occasional contraction of -εο-/-εω- to -ευ- in the *Theriaca*, a typical feature of the Doric dialect, cf. κήδευς (2), ἀροτρεύς (4). Interspersing Ionic with Doric elements is a feature of the epic language of Callimachus and Apollonius and, to a much higher degree, of part of the Theocritean corpus (Gow 1952a, lxxvi). Although the original reasons for such admixtures are not clear, Nic., operating later than these Hellenistic poets, is imitating their style, and may thus have considered the occasional Doricism a standard element of poetic diction.

593 **χολοιβόρον:** 'eating like bile'. The adj. is probably a Nicandrean coinage, created to find yet another way to express the lurid horror of afflictions caused by envenomation. As a means to maintain *variatio*, the combination with ἰόν is thus comparable to γυιοφθόρον ἰόν in 140 or ἀμείλικτον ... ἰόν in 185; see Introduction 6.10.

### *594–603 Pitch, Different Kinds of Fennel, Juniper Berries, Celery, Alexanders, Myrrh, Cummin*

Another short recipe, following the previous series of brief prescriptions of plants and parts. In 597 we find a Homeric adaptation, 596 and 601 yield poetic compound adj.'s. Otherwise the recipe does not seem to lend itself well to poetic innovation, although the poet deserves credit for fitting plenty of ingredients, measures and instructions tightly into elegant hexameters, displaying an ear for alliteration; σπερμεῖα σελίνου, δραχμάων δὲ δύω (599–600), καρπὸν κέρσαιο κυμίνου (601).

594 **Ἄγρει:** cf. 534 n.

**εὐώδεα πίσσαν:** the attractive smell of pitch is confirmed by the proverb about a mouse that tasted pitch, apparently enticed by its pleasant smell. The proverb, ἄρτι μῦς πίσσης γεύεται (see Zanker 2009, 59) is referred to, in various forms, in D. 50.26, Theoc. 14.51, Herod. 2.62–63 and Diogenian. 2.64; see Headlam & Knox 1922, 94, and Zanker 2009, 59.

595 **μέσον ἦτρον:** 'the central pith' of a reed. Austin & Olson (2004, 206), commenting on Ar. *Th.* 509, point out that according to Moeris (η 14) ἦτρον is an exclusively Attic word for the common ὑπογάστριον, i.e. the portion of

the belly between the navel and the genital region, as described in Arist. *HA* 493a19. Although Nic.'s use of the verb deviates from this strict interpretation, the anthropomorphic designation of the middle inner part of a reed's stalk as ἦτρον seems to be a direct adaptation; see also Introduction 8.1. If this is the case, it is interesting that Nic. lards his lofty epic vocabulary with words drawn from Attic diction.

**ὀλόψας:** see 550 n.

**596 ἱππείου μαράθου:** 'horse-fennel'.

**πολυαυξέα:** cf. 73 n.

**597 κεδρίσιν:** 'juniper berries'.

**ἐλεοθρέπτου σελίνου:** borrowed from *Il.* 2.776, λωτὸν ἐρεπτόμενοι ἐλεόθρεπτόν τε σέλινον, where it is used as the fodder of the grazing, idling horses of Achilles' men, who are no longer participating in the war. But whereas in Homer the context lacks any urgency, in the *Theriaca* the gathering of this plant is a serious matter, as lives may be at stake. Kirk (1985, 241–242) suggests that the adj., not found elsewhere, serves to distinguish this species of celery or parsley from rock-parsley. In a similar vein Nic.'s use of the epic compound adj. is not chosen for sheer effect, as 599 will show a second sort of parsley, ἱππείον σελίνον, from which the marsh-parsley is distinguished.

**599 ἔνθα καί:** 'furthermore'; see 483 n.

**σπερμεῖα:** a diminutive not found outside of Nic.; cf. 599, 894, 944, *Al.* 201. Metrically it is of course also a suitable alternative for σπέρματα. For Nic.'s predilection for rare or new alternative formations see Introduction 6.2.

**ἱππείου … σελίνου:** a poetic separation of ἱπποσέλινον, 'alexanders'.

**600 σμύρνης ἐχεπευκέος:** 'pungent myrrh', probably because of its bitter taste; here and in 800. Homer uses the adj. for an arrow, βέλος ἐχεπευκές, in *Il.* 1.51 and 4.129. Nic.'s use of the epithet for a plant is another case of vocabulary and imagery from battle applied to a new context, displaying epic portrayal of natural phenomena; see Introduction 8.8. Eustathius explains the adj. as 'bitter', connecting it to πεύκη and πικρία, and LSJ states that this is the meaning of the word in later use, viz. Nic. It is, however, hard to decide

whether the adj. meant 'bitter' before Nic. or only later on, in which case Nic.'s metaphor would be original.

**601 θερειγενέος ... κυμίνου:** a particularly lofty adj., not found earlier, for cummin. Although compound adj.'s formed with the productive -γενής suffix are common in Greek, θερειγενής, probably a Nicandrean coinage, does not have any parallels. Formations like Θηβαγενής, ὑλογενής, γαιηγενής, and γηγενής all designate origin, but none of these indicate the time or period of origin; ἠριγενής seems to be the only exception (A.R. 3.1224), although its unsurprising use as an epithet of Ἠώς (cf. the Homeric ἠριγένεια) weakens its poetic impact. In comparison, Nic.'s coinage is an interesting improvement of Apollonius' conventional Homeric use. It seems unlikely that the epithet is used here to distinguish this particular sort of cummin from wild cummin (κυμίνου | ... ἀγροτέροιο) which is mentioned in 710–711.

**602 στήσας ... ἄστατον:** *figura etymologica*. For other instances of this figure in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.6.

**603 οἴνην:** see 507 n.

### *604–619 Spikenard, Milk, Crab, Iris, Heath, Tamarisk, Fleabane, Elder, Marjoram, Tree-Medick, Spurge*

After several shorter recipes this passage contains a long enumeration of ingredients, enriched by several geographical (607), mythological (608), and cultic (614–614) references. Just like the previous passages, this section contains a mix of mainly herbal ingredients, although animals are not excluded, to wit a crab in 605 (with a pun on Hesiod). The appearance of Cadmus and Harmonia in 608, turned into snakes, should not surprise in a poem as the *Theriaca*, although surprisingly they are not primarily mentioned here because of their appearance, but in relation to Illyria as a topographical point of reference. The passage contains some reworked phrases from earlier poets, such as the use of the Homeric οὐλαμός (611) in a new context.

**604 νάρδου:** 'spikenard'.

**605–606 ὀκταπόδην ... | καρκίνον:** an interesting case of παρὰ προσδοκίαν; cf. 635 and 815. The adj. is used in Hes. *Op.* 425, in the same *sedes*, of a log that is eight foot in length, which is the only previous occurrence of the adj. Nic. borrows the adj. to use it in a different, yet highly apt manner, to refer to a crab that is literally eight-footed. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 182) point out that the adj.

is to be considered ornamental, not distinctive, as all crabs have eight feet. The element of surprise is enhanced by the postponement of the substantive to the emphatic opening of the next line.

**605** **ποταμοῦ ἀποσυληθέντα:** 'snatched from a river'. The compound verb is used for things taken unjustly in Pi. *P.* 4.110 (of Pelias seizing the Golden Fleece) and S. *OC.* 1330, (of Eteocles robbing Polyneices of his fatherland), but here we need not think of illegal poaching. Nic.'s preference for compound verbs is usually to be considered a stylistic matter associated with the epic register, rather than a significant qualifier of interpretation. This is the only instance in the *Theriaca* of a spondaic line-end not ending in a four-syllable verb, filling out the last two feet; see 20 n.

**606** **ἐνθρύψαιο:** to achieve maximum variation in modes of hortatory expressions, the opt. is used here, following the *infinitivus pro imperativo* ἑλέσθαι in 604, and the imperat. πῖνε in 603, avoiding close repetition of two opt.'s, with κέρσαιο in 601. See Introduction 6.10.

**607** **ἶρίν:** 'iris'.

**Δρίλων καὶ Νάρανος ὄχθαι:** both rivers in Illyria, Gow & Scholfield 1953, 182. The names clearly serve to introduce a short reference to Cadmus, and not to indicate any place where the iris is to be found in particular, which would be of no use to Nic.'s internal addressee. As a learned reference, however, the remark is directed at both the internal and the external addressees.

**608** **Σιδονίου … Ἁρμονίης τε:** Cadmus' origin from Sidon in Phoenicia is elsewhere attested by E. fr. 819.1 *TGF*, Σιδώνιόν ποτ' ἄστυ Κάδμος ἐκλιπών, from the play *Phrixus*; cf. Ov. *Met.* 4.572. Nic., however, is not referring to the origin of Cadmus or Harmonia (who, being the daughter of Ares and Aphrodite, does not come from Sidon anyway), but to their current abode in Illyria (cf. ἔνθα in 609). This differs from earlier versions, where the pair eventually goes to the Island of the Blessed (Pi. *O.* 2.78, E. *Ba.* 1330–1339), or where they die in Illyria, as is clear from A.R. 4.517, where reference is made to their grave (οἱ δ' ἄρ' ἐπ' Ἰλλυρικοῖο μελαμβαθέος ποταμοῖο, | τύμβος ἵν' Ἁρμονίης Κάδμοιό τε); cf. Call. fr. 11 Harder, where the 'stone of the snake Harmonia' close to the Illyrian seaway is mentioned (οἱ μὲν ἐπ' Ἰλλυρικοῖο πόρου σχάσσαντες ἐρετμά | λᾶα πάρα ξανθῆς Ἁρμονίης ὄφιος). According to Asper (2004, 77 n. 69) the snakepair is literally petrified, ("wurden im höchsten Alter in schlangengestalt versteinert"), but Callimachus' idea of λᾶα as a gravestone (i.e. the τύμβος mentioned by

Apollonius) shows that he is playing with both interpretations. There is much confusion about the later life of Cadmus and Harmonia, their transformation into snakes, their leadership of a vast city-sacking army (E. *Ba.* 1330–1339), and their eventual retreat to the Island of the Blessed. Euripides' lost *Cadmus* is likely to have contained some of the answers to all this, as is the lacuna of ca. 50(?) lines before E. *Ba.* 1330; see Gantz 1993, 472–473.

It is interesting that in the presentation of his reference to the myth Nic. has fixed the episode of Cadmus and Harmonia's stay in Illyria as if it is part of the present (cf. the present tense στείβουσι in 609), ignoring their death or transfer to the Islands of the Blessed later on. Not only does he choose to maintain his own version (or at least a less-known alternative) here, but at the same time he makes Cadmus and his wife to be as much a contemporary presence of his time as any other snake, blending in mythical primeval time with the present.

The marriage of Cadmus and Harmonia is the topic of various poems, cf. Thgn. 15–18, Pi. *Dith.* fr. 70B.27–32, E. *Ph.* 822, Honest. *AP* 9.216 (*GPh* 2408), but the reference to Cadmus and Harmonia here is, somewhat unexpectedly, connected to the region of Illyria, and neither to their marriage, nor to their metamorphoses into snakes of the dragon-type, treated in 438–447. It seems that the poet wanted to keep the reference to this famous pair of snakes for later use, as he had another mythological excursus at his disposal in that passage, viz. the fostering of the dragon by Paieon, allowing him to distribute references more evenly across the poem.

**609** **δύω … δράκοντε:** another case of δύω with the dual, cf. 231 and Introduction 6.3. The dual δράκοντε is not new, cf. [Hes.] *Sc.* 233, S. fr. 596.1 *TrGF*, E. *Ion* 23, 1427, Theoc. 24.91, but its use here does suit a poetic register.

**δασπλῆτε:** 'frightful', a rare adj. found once in Homer, with a distinct fem. ending (*Od.* 15.234, θεὰ δασπλῆτις Ἐρινύς, probably imitated by [Hes.] fr. 280.9 MW = Minyas 7 *PEG*). Its use of divine entities both horrifying and powerful, such as Erinys (Euph. *CA* 94.1, p. 47 = 98 Van Groningen), Charybdis (Simon. 17.1.1 *PMG*), and Hecate (Theoc. 2.14) in earlier poets seems to explain Nic.'s use here for Cadmus and Harmonia, who are after all not regular snakes, although the triple δ-allitteration (δύω δασπλῆτε … δράκοντε) may play a part too. The adj. was picked up by other Hellenistic poets too; cf. Call. fr. 30.1 Harder and Lyc. 1452.

**610** **λάζεο:** see 108 n. In order to avoid repetition 612 has λάζοιο; see Introduction 6.10.

**ἄφαρ:** 'straightaway'. The epic adv. is characteristic of, though not restricted to, Homer. Although occasional instances occur in tragedy, their context betrays that the adv. was still felt as belonging to epic diction; Cuypers 1997, 171. Of the Hellenistic poets Apollonius is most keen on its use (21×), but it is found in most others too. The only other instance in Nic. is *Ther.* 203, on which see n.

**τανύφυλλον ἐρείκην:** in Homer the adj. is only used as an epithet of the olive-tree, τανύφυλλος ἐλαίη (*Od.* 13.102, 346, 23.190, 195, three times in the Nicandrean *sedes*). Nic., recognising its potential for other plants with long-pointed leaves as well, uses it here aptly, although ornamental, for heather. Its use elsewhere is rare; Nicias *AP* 7.200.1 (*HE* 2767), as a noun, and [Theoc.] 25.221, of a mountain with thick foliage; B. 10.55 Maehler has τανίφυλλος, like [Theoc.] of a mountain.

**611 μελισσαῖος … οὐλαμός:** before Nic. the noun οὐλαμός is only found in the *Iliad* (4.251, 273, 20.113, 379), always in the combination οὐλαμὸν ἀνδρῶν. Nic.'s adaptation here consists of two parts: the Homeric combination is imitated (in the same *sedes*) by means of the homophonous οὐλαμὸς ἕρπων, and the Homeric contents ('a throng of warriors') is changed to 'a throng of bees' by introducing a new adj. The new combination is particularly striking: not only does the poet portray animals as Homeric warriors once again, but the opposition between the Homeric example and the Nicandrean imitation is strengthened by the context of both instances. In Homer the combination οὐλαμὸν ἀνδρῶν is not just used of any group of people, but particularly of a throng of warriors in battle; it is not used in the *Odyssey*, where a context of war is absent. Nic. on the other hand applies the noun to the least warlike creatures among the animals, viz. bees. To characterise bees as an οὐλαμός is thus a clear wink to the Homeric context. See Introduction 7.3 and 8.8. Perhaps influenced by Nic. (either through the *Georgica* or the *Melissurgica*) Vergil uses the same image in the fourth book of the *Georgics* 4, where bees are portrayed as an army, ready for battle (4.67–90).

**περιβόσκεται:** according to Williams (1978, 74), commenting on Call. *Ap.* 84, "almost certainly a Callimachean coinage". Nic.'s use, in the same *sedes*, is therefore likely to be an imitation; cf. 391, although in a different position. For Nic.'s technique of borrowing rare words see Introduction 6.5. Here an unusual word found in an earlier poet is taken out of its unusual context, and applied to a context that is overly normal, like the natural, even neutral, setting of plants and bees here; see Introduction 7.3.

**ἕρπων:** the choice of verb is marked, as ἕρπω and its cognates (ἑρπετόν, ἑρπηστής) are associated with serpents throughout the poem (9, 21, 159, 206, 216, 279, 355, 390, 397, 481, 702). Its use here of the movement of bees is therefore surprising, since they can hardly be said to crawl; a remote parallel can be found in Alcm. 89.3–4 *PMGF*, φῦλά τ' ἑρπέτ' ὅσα τρέφει μέλαινα γαῖα | θῆρές τ' ὀρεσκώιοι καὶ γένος μελισσᾶν. The natural, almost pastoral image of heather (ἐρεικήν in 610) surrounded by bees, is thus related to Nic.'s main topics in two ways: to serpents by means of ἕρπω, and to Homeric battle imagery by means of the noun οὐλαμός; see previous n.

**612 μυρίκης:** 'tamarisk'.

**πανακαρπέα:** only here, apparently a Nicandrean coinage; see Introduction 6.2.

**613 μάντιν … γεράσμιον:** 'an honoured diviner among mortals'. According to Nic. the tamarisk (μυρίκη, 612) was given prophetic powers by Apollo, an association not mentioned elsewhere, apart from Σ *Ther.* 613a. The latter tells us that Alcaeus (fr. 444 Voigt) says that "in the war against the Erythraeans Apollo appeared to Archeanactides and his companions in their sleep with a branch of tamarisk in his hand" (transl. Campbell). This is the kind of abstruse learning usually associated with Callimachus and Apollonius, who set the standard for obscure references to local cults and geography.

**Ἀπόλλων | … Κοροπαῖος:** Corope is in Thessaly, near Pagasae (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 182). According to Σ *Ther.* 613a the use of a branch of the tamarisk was widespread among diviners, e.g. the Magi, the Scyths and the Medes. Many places in Europe knew the practice, and on Lesbos there was a cult of Apollo Muricaeus; see Jacques 2002, 176–177 for details. For the confusion caused by the variant reading 'Οροπᾶιος see Jacques 2002, 48.

**613 ἐν ζωοῖσι:** usually in the opposition alive ~ dead, cf. *Od.* 10.51–52, ἠὲ πεσὼν ἐκ νηὸς ἀποφθίμην ἐνι πόντῳ, | ἦ ἀκέων τλαίην καὶ ἔτι ζωοῖσι μετείην, E. *Supp.* 969–970, οὔτ' ἐν ⟨τοῖς⟩ φθιμένοις | οὔτε ζῶσ' ἀριθμουμένη, Theoc. 4.42 ἐλπίδες ἐν ζωοῖσιν, ἀνέλπιστοι δὲ θανόντες, Asclep. *AP* 5.85 (*HE* 818), ἐν ζωοῖσι τὰ τερπνὰ τα Κύπριδος, ἐν δ' Ἀχέροντι | ὀστέα καὶ σποδιή … κεισόμεθα, Pl. Jun. *AP* 7.670.1–2 (*FGE* 586–587), πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν Ἑῷος· | νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις Ἕσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις, etc. Nic.'s use here is exceptional, as such an opposition is evidently lacking. Despite the tragic suggestion of the combination, its use here is merely a high-flown variant of the expression 'among men'.

**614 μαντοσύνας:** the *figura etymologica* (cf. μάντιν in 613) is underlined by the anaphoric placement of the cognate nouns.

**615 μίξ:** an adv. only found here, apparently as a variant of μίγδην (932), συμμίγδην (677), ἀμμίγδην (41, 93, 912) and ἄμμιγα (850, 857, 941, 943, 949, 954): lexical variation seems to be considered of paramount poetic importance to the poet; see Introduction 6.10. Although the adv. seems to be a Nicandrean coinage, later grammarians and lexicographers (Philoxenus, Herodianus, Orion) knew the word and discussed its formation, which could be an indication of occasional use of the adv. by other authors. Although Nic. is obviously keen on variation, he does not use the suitable Homeric ἐπιμίξ, which was picked up by Aratus only (364, 454). If Aratus' borrowing of the marked Homeric adv. was noticed by Nic., the latter's avoidance of ἐπιμίξ, together with his use of five other variants, could be part of Nic.'s agonistic stance towards Aratus. Although evidence is lacking, it can tentatively be suggested that Nic.'s choice here shows that he read the Homeric adv. as ἐπὶ μίξ, thus condemning Aratus' imitation of the compound.

**κονυζῆεν:** for Nic.'s habit of coining adj.'s (particularly in -εις; see 34 n.) of plant names, such as 'fleabane' here, see Introduction 6.2.

**ἀκτῆς:** 'elder tree'.

**616 ἰδέ:** the use of the conjunction ἰδέ here and in 856 probably stems from Homeric epic, where it is relatively rare (24× in the *Iliad*, 11× in the *Odyssey*), although other early instances may be of relevance too, e.g. Hes. *Th.* 18, 887, [Hes.] *Sc.* 185, *h.Cer.* 151, 190. Its common position in the hexameter is directly after the trochaic caesura (31× in Homer), where it is usually followed by a noun (two exceptions); both characteristics are observed by Nic., here and in 856. In addition, observance in *Al.* 12, 395 and 467 shows Nic. is probably well aware of the proper position of ἰδέ within the line. Post-Homeric occurrences are relatively rare; according to Ruijgh (1957) the only instance is A.R. 4.1621. It is not used by Callimachus, Theocritus or Aratus, and Nic. seems to be one of the few Hellenistic poets who incorporated this marked phenomenon of early epic diction; cf. Introduction 6.1.

**πτέρα:** 'leaves', as both the context and Σ *Ther.* 616b, which gives φύλλα, make. The only possible parallel for this usage, as given by Jacques, is S. fr. 23 *TrGF*, ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν φύλλοισιν αἰγείρου μακρᾶς, | κἂν ἄλλο μηδέν, ἀλλὰ τοὐκείνης κάρα | κινεῖ τις αὔρα κἀνακουφίζει πτερόν. But, as Jacques admits, Sophocles may be writing about a real feather here; cf. "… a breeze moves its top and lifts a feather

…", in Lloyd-Jones' translation (1996, 21). Perhaps Pi. *O.* 14.24, ἀέθλων πτεροῖσι, could be considered a parallel. The combination yields 'the *crown* of victory, which lifts the victor to heaven' (LSJ III.2), but the fact that this crown is in fact composed of bay leaves shows an interpretation of πτέρα as leaves; cf. Race's (1997, 207) translation "wreaths". The noun can be used, however, of anything shaped like wings or feathers (LSJ III), which makes Nic.'s image less far-fetched; cf. 814 n.

**617** **σαμψύχου:** 'marjoram'.

**κύτισόν:** 'tree-medick'.

**εὐγλαγέας:** 'with milky juice'. A rare adj., not found elsewhere except for the cognate forms εὔγλαγι in Leon. Tarent. *AP* 9.744 (*HE* 2480), of goat's milk, and εὔγλαγον in Lyc. 307, Αἰαῖ, στενάζω καὶ σὸν εὔγλαγον θάλος, where Priam's son Troilus is portrayed as a "fair-fostered flower" (transl. Mair). Nic.'s use is different from both previous instances, although Lycophron's connection between the adj. and the metaphorically used θάλος may have given Nic. the idea of a literal application of the adj. to plants.

**τιθυμάλλους:** 'spurge'.

**618** A second violation of Hilberg's Law; see 97 n. and Introduction 6.11.

**λίγδῳ:** see 589 n.

**σκαφίδεσσι δοχαίαις:** the adj. is redundant but, being a coinage, it serves to embellish the noun here. It is not impossible that the poet uses σκαφίδες here with *Od.* 9.223 in mind, as its use there seems to have inspired Theocritus too in 5.59 (Gow 1952b, 104). But Nic.'s case is weaker as it lacks the double reference to Homer found in Theoc. 5.58–59 (γαυλώς and σκαφίδας). Gow points out that σκαφίς is not confined to dairy and is used in other texts as well, e.g. Antiphan. fr. 224 K-A, Anaxipp. fr. 6 K-A, which makes it less probable that the noun is chosen for its poetic colour here. The plur. employed by Nic. may, however, be an indication that he is imitating Homer or Theocritus, as the poet's use of the plur. as a poetic figure per se hardly ever occurs; see 26 n. The only other instance (*Al.* 15) is discussed by White 1987, 73.

**619** **μέθυ:** see 507 n.

### *620–624 Boiled Frogs, Snake's Liver, Snake's Head*

As Schneider (1962, 39 n. 8) observes, Gow & Scholfield's choices in separating different sections are sometimes unclear, as is the case with 620–624, which is not separated in Gow & Scholfield's edition; in this respect Jacques presents a tidier text. This section gives us boiled frogs in 621 and a snake's liver and head in 622–623. As Schneider observes these are once again single recipes, despite the poet's announcement to treat compounds first; see 528–540 n. This section yields an interesting imitation with variation of Aratus in 620–621.

**620** **ἀλλ' ἤτοι:** see 8 n. The combination marks the clear shift from the previous self-contained topic (viz. plant ingredients) to a new one (viz. animal parts).

**γερύνων καναχοὶ περίαλλα τοκῆες:** 'the extremely noisy parents of tadpoles'. The combination's periphrastic nature is reminiscent of earlier kennings (142, 349, 357, 388, 491), but unlike these proper kennings (see Introduction 6.7), the element of circumlocution, viz. not naming the animal described, is ignored here, and the illusion of a kenning is undone by means of the apposition βάτραχοι in the next line. The phrase is an adaptation of Aratus' πατέρες βοόωσι γυρίνων (947), but whereas the frogs' croaking seems to serve a purpose in the *Phaenomena*, being one of the *diosemeia* treated in the second part of the poem, in Nic.'s borrowing such a purpose is absent. With this purely ornamental adaptation Nic. shows us he noticed Aratus' elegant description, and tries to cap it by making the frogs' noise even more marked through the insertion of the adv. περίαλλα. The trick is repeated in *Al.* 563, where the same noisy frogs are called λαιδρός (καί τε σύ γ' ἢ γερύνων λαιδροὺς δαμάσαιο τοκῆας).

**621** **βάτραχοι … ἄριστοι:** another instance of animal parts to be included in a recipe. For the *hyperbaton* see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8.

**622** **ἧπαρ:** for the use of a part of the snake itself (in this line its liver, in the next line its head) as part of the remedy cf. 108–111.

**623** **σίνταο:** 'robber', here of a snake, but Homer uses σίντης of other natural raiders, viz. a lion (*Il.* 11.481, 20.165) and a wolf (*Il.* 16.353). Call. fr. 54c.29 Harder (177 Pf. = *SH* 259), probably in imitation of Homer, is an interesting case of Alexandrian reuse, as the noun is used for presenting the mice that are harassing Molorcus as evil warriors, likened to lions. In Nic. such comic parody

is absent, but the use of the noun is extended to a different kind of predator, although the context does not emphasise the predatory nature of snakes, and σίντης is merely used as a synonym here.

**ἄλλοτε … | … τοτέ:** although the correlative use of τοτε suggests a temporal use, such an interpretation hardly makes sense here. A victim of poisoning is not interested in soaking a snake's head 'sometimes' in water, 'sometimes' in wine, as he is pressed for time. What we have here is another instance of ἄλλοτε used for ἤ, and Nic. is clearly talking of alternative procedures with the same result, irreverent of time; cf. 82 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**νύμφαις:** 'water'. The metonymy is not unique, cf. Mel. *AP* 9.331 (*HE* 4708), Antiph. *AP* 9.258.2 (*GPh* 748), and perhaps Posidipp. 113.14 AB (*FGE* 1731 = *SH* 978); see Giangrande 1973, 349. But whereas Meleager sets the metonymy up from the start, juxtaposing water and wine (Αἱ Νύμφαι τὸν Βάκχον … | νίψαν … | τοὔνεκα σύν Νύμφαις Βρόμιος φίλος …), Nic.'s use is less obtrusive and seems to presuppose knowledge of the expression on the part of his readers. In this line the combined expression of exposing 'a robber to the nymphs' is particularly high-flown for the simple preparation of a recipe.

**624 ἐμπισθέν:** the verb ἐμπιπίσκω ('soak', 'give to drink', cognate to ἐμπίνω) used here, in 573 and in 877 is very rare, which contrasts sharply with Nic.'s relatively frequent use; cf. *Al.* 277, 320 and 519. Elsewhere it seems to be used only by Pindar, fr. 111.1.

**τοτέ:** see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

### *625–629 Gold-Flower, Blue Pimpernel, Marjoram, Pot Marjoram, Savory*

Another short recipe, mentioning *Heracles' organy*, although this time there is no reference to the origin of the plant or to Heracles' possible role as πρῶτος εὑρετής (cf. Cheiron in 492). Among the rare words in this passage, such as the unique στρομβεῖα, the adj. ἐμφόρβια may be a significant example of Nic.'s technique of putting words from another lexical realm in a new context, with a new meaning.

**625 ἑλιχρύσοιο:** 'gold-flower'.

**λιπεῖν:** for the use of the *infinitivus pro imperativo* see Introduction 6.10.

**πολυδευκέος:** 'sweet', as translated by Gow & Scholfield; cf. 209, where it seems to mean 'varied'. Van der Valk (1949, 83) points out that Nic. uses the word as an antonym of ἀδευκής, which is used by Alexandrian poets with the meaning 'bitter' (although this appears to be limited to Apollonius, e.g. A.R. 2.267). Σ *Ther*. 625b points in the same direction, δεῦκος γὰρ τὸ γλυκὺ παρ' Αἰτωλοῖς, ὅθεν ἀδευκής ὁ πικρός.

626 **κόρκορον:** 'blue pimpernel'.

**πανάκτειόν:** the adj. is not added to designate a particular plant, but points out its particular qualities; cf. 508, where Cheiron's root is called πανάκειον. The only plant mentioned that seems to be designated as panacea by its name is πάνακες in 565.

**κονίλην:** 'marjoram'.

627 **ἥν τε καί … ἔπουσι:** for the pattern cf. 230 n. The relation between the organy-herb and Heracles is not known, nor is it explained by Nic., as oppossed to the similar 'root of Cheiron' in 501–508, where the origin of the plant is dealt with in a digression. There may be a connection to the white poplar, whose root is called Ἡρακλέος ἱερὸν ἔρνος in Theoc. 2.121. According to Pausanias (5.14.2) it was brought to Greece by Heracles from Thesprotis; Gow 1952b, 57.

628 **ὄνου πετάλειον:** ὀνόφυλλον (Σ *Ther*. 628a) or ὀνῖτις (Σ *Al*. 56d). As White (1987, 41) points out, ὄνου is used here as an etymological pun on the proper name of the plant known as ὀνῖτις ('pot marjoram'). Such etymological word-play is part of a larger scheme of learned display comprising etymology (332–333, 628, 642), aetiology (8–20, 31, 309–319, 343–358, 484–487), including the indication of a πρῶτος εὑρετής (500, 541, 627), and topographical periphrasis (458–462, 633–635, 668–670); for etymological play in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.6.

**πετάλειον:** only here and in 638, as a poetic variant of πέταλον. Nic. is particularly fond of nouns in -ειον, most of which may well be his own coinages; see Introduction 6.2. Although such words bear resemblance to regular diminutives in -ιον, their respective contexts give little reason to assume they are all intended as such.[14] Nic. may have picked the idea up from Arat. 1008, where

14 Exceptions are formations in -ειον that are variants of diminutives in -ιον. In these cases

δενδρείοιο is introduced as a poetic variant of the Homeric δένδρεον (see *Ther.* 832); see Kidd 1997, 527.

**629 θύμβρης:** see 531.

**ἐμφόρβια:** according to Gow 'restrain' (1951, 101), or 'muzzle' (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 71) are more suitable than 'eating away' the evil affliction, as LSJ gives. A rare word, which only occurs elsewhere twice: according to Hesychius τὸ ἐμφόρβιον is pasture-tax (τελώνημα), which seems to be confirmed by Meritt (1935, 375) in his publication of some inscriptions from Colophon from the fourth century BCE; cf. the verb ἐμφορβίω, 'to impose pasture-tax', found in a fourth century BCE Tegean inscription (*IG* 5(2).3.3). Nic.'s use here may be another case of his fondness for giving rare or, as in this case, technical words, new meaning in an altogether new context. If this is correct, LSJ may after all (*pace* Jacques 2002, 49) be closer than Gow & Scholfield's correction, as 'grazing on' may be literally what Nic. intends to say here, returning to the basic idea of the φορβ-root. In this way the countering remedy parallels the opposite idea of the 'consuming poison' (καταβόσκεται) in 244, where the same image is used.

### *630–635 Rhamnus*

The next item on Nic.'s list is rhamnus (ῥάμνος), which apparently is sufficient by itself, and does not need to be treated or mixed with other ingredients. A victim of poisoning, however, might well be wondering if he is to eat the herb, apply it to the wound, or use it otherwise. The poet has turned his full attention to rendering recipes into sparkling verse, and has little eye for practical details. The colouring of plant descriptions with additional information in this passage, as in 607–614, is of interest to the external addressee just as much as to the internal. For further details on the places mentioned see Jacques 2002, 181 and Introduction 8.5.

**630 ἄγρει μάν:** the use of the Aeolic μάν instead of μήν, found only here, betrays the Homeric origin of the combination, as in *Il.* 5.765 and 7.459. For the interpretation of ἄγρει see 534 n.

**ῥάμνον:** 'rhamnus'.

Nic.'s spelling seems to be hypercorrection of iotacised forms, e.g. his use of κυάθειον (591) for the regular diminutive κυάθιον.

**ἐΐσην:** fourteen times in the *Iliad*, always at line-end, and always in the set phrases ἀσπίδα πάντοσ' ἐΐσην or ἔσχετο πάντοσ' ἐΐσην. Only the fem. sg. and plur. are used by Homer, a practice observed by Nic. here, whose ῥάμνον retains the assonance of the -α- and the -ο- of the Homeric πάντοσ', thus confirming the borrowing within the adaptation. As often, Nic.'s use is otherwise unrelated to Homer, and here the adj. is chosen as the epic variant of ἶσος. In fact, the Homeric use is far from 'alike to' and has its own set of interpretations, none of which suit Nic.'s here. As usual, Nic. aims to achieve lexical impact for his poetry by reuse of archaic material in an alien context, rather than by intertextual relevance. Apart from Nic.'s, the only later occurrences are in Ath. (1.21.8, 11).

**631 ἀεὶ περιδέδρομεν ἄνθῃ:** a description adapted from 503, χυτὴ περιδέδρομε χαίτῃ and 542, ἀεὶ περιτέτροφε χαίτῃ, both at line-end. Although the similarities are apparent, Nic. strictly adheres to *variatio*; see Introduction 6.10. The assonance of ἀεί and ἄνθῃ (here augmented by ἀργῆτι) may be echoing that of χυτή and χαίτῃ in 503, when in addition their enclosing of περιδέδρομε is taken into account.

**632–633 τήν … καλέουσιν | ἀνέρες:** for the pattern see 230 n.

**632 φιλέταιριν:** a nickname of the plant otherwise known as rhamnus, a prickly buckthorn. Its name is presumably connected to the two graves mentioned in the next line (cf. Lazaris 2005, 224), either because they are protected by the spiny plant, or because the plant 'keeps them company', which yields another instance of the personification of a plant; see Introduction 8.1.

**633 Τμώλοιο παραὶ Γύγαό τε σῆμα:** of the graves of Tmolus and Gyges only the latter is mentioned elsewhere; cf. Σ *Ther.* 633b. Hippon. 42.3 IEG² (7 Degani) has καὶ σῆμα Γύγ⟨εω⟩, in a fragment that contains a fragmentary travel description from the inland westwards to Smyrna on the coast, through Lydia, and past the tomb of Attalus and the grave of Gyges. Accordingly, they are referred to by Nic. as lying in Lydia. Tmolus, also known by the older name of Timolus (Ov. *Met.* 6.15, 11.86, Plin. *Nat.* 5.110) is mentioned as a mountain in Lydia (Σ *Ther.* 633a), but not as a person. According to Keil (1937, 1628) Tmolus was also the name of a city in the same area (destroyed by an earthquake in 17 CE), named eponymously after a mountain god, which is supported numismatically. A reference to the grave of a god is, however, unlikely, as the famous grave of Zeus in Creta, referred to in Call. *Jov.* 8–9 is clearly unique, and presented as an *adynaton*. It is thus likely that Nic. is referring to the Lydian king mentioned

in [Apollod.] 2.131 W. (2.6.3 F.) as the husband of Omphale. This matches well with Gyges, who is of Lydian origin too (Hdt. 1.8.1).

634 **Παρθένιον … λέπας:** nothing is known besides what the scholia tell us: ἀκρωτήριον τῆς Λυδίας οὕτω καλούμενον (Σ *Ther.* 634a). Nic. is summing up several elements in the region, as a sort of periphrasis of Lydia, to show his geographical knowledge of the area. Since all sites are close to Clarus, we are not dealing with exotic material from the poet's point of view, although to a more universal audience such elements of learning may well have had a certain appeal. The passage is similar to 458–462, where Thrace is described by summing up some of its sites, both as a portrayal of knowledge and a poetic depiction; cf. Introduction 8.5.

**Κίλβιν:** according to Σ *Ther.* 634c ὄρος Λυδίας ἢ τόπος ἢ ποταμός. Another reference to Lydia, and as such part of a larger enumeration containing a mountain height, a river, a mountain and two monumental tombs. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 182) are probably right in following Strabo (13.629), who mentions a Κιλβιανὸν πεδίον, πολύ τε καὶ συνοικούμενον εὖ καὶ χώραν ἔχον σπουδαίαν. This is at least the most likely option considering the grazing horses in the next line.

**ἀεργοί:** one of the very few instances (Theogn. 1177 can be mentioned, although in a different way) where ἀεργός is used positively. It comprises a significant change from earlier poets, where the adj. means 'idle', with undertones of lazy and unwilling, e.g. Hes. *Op.* 305, the only instance of ἀεργοί at line-end before Nic. Here the adj. is used to paint a natural setting of horses grazing the plane (see previous n.) of Cilbis, which, as a sort of bucolic image, is far from the connotations of ἀεργός elsewhere. Such inverted use of words, frequent in the *Theriaca* (see Introduction 7.3), is, however, not pursued consistently, cf. the use of ἀεργός in 381 of chilblains, another testimony of Nic.'s preference for using different meanings of the same word within one poem. Nic.'s use here, a παρὰ προσδοκίαν, is enhanced by the postponement of ἵπποι χιλεύουσι to the next line.

635 **χιλεύουσι:** the only other instance of the verb is Thphr. *CP* 2.17.6, where it is used for supplying cows and horses (ὑποζύγια) with fodder (χιλός); cf. χιλόω in X. *An.* 7.2.21. Here the horses help themselves to their fodder by grazing pastures. Nic. does not seem to have such a particular use in mind and uses the verb as a recherché synonym of βόσκω or φέρβω.

**Καΰστρου:** the mouth of the Caÿster, being close to Clarus (some 10 km), must have been a well-known location to the poet; it is also known from Call. *Dian.*

257, who reworked a Homeric reference (*Il.* 2.461); Bornmann 1968, 125–126. The sources of the river (ἀντολαί, not a poeticism, cf. Plb. 2.17.4) are in the Tmolus-mountains, some 80 km north-east of Clarus.

### *636–644 Two Kinds of Viper's Bugloss*

After Nic. has rounded off his account of plants and herbs he will now proceed with roots (ῥίζας ἐρέω, 636), another category of natural ingredients. The roots described, however, are part of ingredients that comprise other elements as well (κόμην, 'foliage' in 648, σπέραδος 'seed' in 649), and many other roots have already been treated previously (cf. 500–505, 514, 529, 534, 541–548, 596). The section is therefore close to the previous ones. Although we would expect the poet to treat the ῥιζοτόμον … ὥρην here as well, as promised in 494, the poet confines himself to an account of root-based recipes. Nic.'s stated aim of countering snakebites, which has been out of view for a long part of the poem as the poet was merely concerned with plants and recipes, is back in focus, as 636 brings the main purpose of the poem to the attention again.

**636** **Νῦν δ' ἄγε:** see 359 n.

**ἐρέω:** whereas most instructions are given in the second person, by using a finite verb in the first person this new section redirects the attention to the persona of the teacher. Such use of the first person functions as a structural marker, dividing different parts of the poem; cf. ἐνίψω in 282, where the account of a new snake begins, διείσομαι in 494, marking the start of the second half of the first part, λέξω in 528, where the section on compounds starts, and αὐδήσω in the opening lines of the section on scorpions; cf. Introduction 5.10.

**ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγούς:** cf. ὀφίεσσιν ἀρωγήν in 527, and κνωψὶν ἀρωγήν in 520. Even when the poet seems to repeat himself by using 'formulaic' line-ends we find slight variations. For Nic.'s use of *variatio* see Introduction 6.10.

**637** **ἔνθα:** see 483 n.

**ἐχίεια:** 'viper's bugloss'.

**πιφαυσκέω:** see 411 n.

**τῆς δὲ τὸ μὲν που:** starting a new description (as clearly announced in 636–637) after the bucolic diaeresis adds speed to the teacher's account, as he gives the impression of running ahead and does not want to wait until the next line. The

result is a ready start of this new section, engaging the addressees as they are signalled to prick up their ears. For the technique cf. 716 n.

**638** **ἀκανθῆεν:** see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**πετάλειον:** see 628 n. Although Nic.'s fondness of formations in -ειον is apparent throughout the poem, here πετάλειον seems to have the value of a proper diminutive, as is implied by παῦρον ἐπεί in the next line, and not merely of a poetic variant.

**639** **τυτθόν:** see 755 n.

**641** **ὑψηλή:** the enjambment is emphatic, underlining the contrast with the other variant of viper's bugloss just described, which was said to have a small leaf (638) and a short and superficial root.

**καλχαίνεται:** a rare verb, used in S. *Ant.* 20, E. *Heracl.* 40 and Lyc. 1457, and derived from κάλχη, 'purple murex', which is all but a synonym of πορφύρα. The verb was apparently devised as an analogy to the Homeric πορφύρω, expressing 'to be seething dark', used metaphorically ('turning as dark-red as purple') in *Ant.* 20 and *Heracl.* 40; Griffith 1999, 125. Jerram (1888, 5) sees an indirect reference, with the colour of the sea compared to purple, and human figures in turn compared to the purple sea. Either way, both poets used the verb metaphorically. In Lyc. the use of the verb (ὧν ἐκάλχαινεν τυχεῖν) is explained by the scholia as ἧς ἐπεθύμει, ἐμερίμνα λαβεῖν (Scheer 1881–1908, 115), which shows the same metaphorical idea, although to Lycophron the tragic verb does not seem to be more than a rare synonym for 'to have an urge'. It is therefore clear that Nic.'s use here is entirely different: the metaphor is abandoned and the verb is reduced to its basic meaning 'to be purple-coloured', a sophisticated twist, as the verb does not seem to have this original meaning at all and it was used metaphorically from the start.

**642** **βλάστη … κάρηαρ:** 'its shoot resembles that of the viper, and its head is rough on top'. White (1987, 42–44) points out that the ms reading βλάστη does not need emendation to βλαστεῖ, as Gow & Scholfield suggest. Her assumption that when writing ἔχις Nic. is thinking of the plant *echis* and not of the viper, is less convincing. Nic. takes the opportunity to underline the etymological relation between the appearance of the second type of ἐχίειον treated here and the viper itself, just like he wanted us to be aware of the etymological relation between the plant ὀνῖτις and its relation to the ass (ὄνος) in 678. Throughout

the poem the poet *qua* teacher has been training us to recognise the different shapes and forms of both snakes and plants. Here the two are combined and, as by now we should be able to recognise a viper, that same viper can be used to identify one of the two types of viper's bugloss. It is likely that the plant's name (ἐχίειον) was already established before the poem, but Nic. puts it to use in explaining its etymology, which may or may not be his own invention; see Introduction 6.6. For the suggestion of κάρειον for κάρηαρ see West 1963, 57.

**σφεδανόν:** LSJ tentatively proposes 'having a rough surface', apparently based upon Σ *Ther.* 642 τὸ τραχὺ καὶ σκληρὸν καὶ σφιγκτόν. This is, however, not unproblematic, as the adj., a lexical variant of σφοδρός, is not used elsewhere in this way. It can be suggested that Nic. is not referring to the texture of the plant here, but to the horror of the snake with which the appearance of the shoot is compared. In Homer we only find the more neutral adverbial use, 'vehemently', *Il.* 11.165, 16.372, 21.254, but the interpretation of 'horrible' or 'violent' would accord with the negative connotations of σφεδανός elsewhere, of a lion's jaws (Antip. Sid. *AP* 6.219.12 = *HE* 619), of violent factions (στάσιας, Xenoph. 1.23 *IEG*² = Gentili-Prato = Ath. 11.462c), and of Artemis' bow in Euph. *CA* 9.10, p. 31 (11 Van Groningen), although there the context is indecisive. Perhaps Nic. means 'on top the shoot [is] like the horrible head of the viper', which would not be surprising, considering the fact that the poet hardly ever misses an opportunity to point out the horror snakes embody, even if the context does not demand this.

**κάρηαρ:** perhaps in imitation of Antim. 155 Matthews (120 Wyss). But Nic.'s κάρηαρ is a conjecture by Schneider, as the mss have κάρειαρ and κάρηνον. The lack of context in Antimachus does not help to establish a clear link, although we do know that Nic. was an admirer of Antimachus; see 3 n. and Introduction 6.5.

**643 ἀνδρακάδα:** only here; ἀνδρακάς ('portion') is a noun derived from the Homeric adv. ἀνδρακάς ('man by man', *Od.* 13.14), as noticed by Crugnola 1961, 128.

**χραισμεῖν:** for the use of the *infinitivus pro imperativo* see 45 n. and Introduction 6.10. For the verb and its cognates see 576 n.

**644 σφέλᾳ:** a Homeric rarity, picked up earlier by Apollonius (3.1159). In *Od.* 18.349 the noun is used for a footstool; the plur. is used in 17.231. It is used with

the same meaning by Apollonius of a stool at the foot of a couch. Nic. seems to understand some kind of wooden chopping-block, once again lifting an epic noun out if its context, and applying it to the ordinary practicalities of daily life.

**ὅλμῳ:** an ordinary mortar; cf. 506 and 951. The juxtaposition of the rare σφέλας to the common ὅλμος helps to deflate such words from epic diction. Yet at the same time such deflation helps to underline his learned use of rare words.

**ῥωγάδι πέτρῃ:** cf. 518 n. The combination is only twice found elsewhere, of rugged rocks in Theoc. 24.95 (ῥωγάδας ἐς πέτρας), and in A.R. 4.1448, of a rock cleft by the blow of Heracles' foot (ῥωγάδος ἐκ πέτρης). Compounds, however, usually associated with rocks as well, are more frequent, cf. καταρρῶγες πέτραι (S. *Ph.* 937), πέτρας ἀμφιρρῶγας (A.R. 1.995), πέτρα περιρρώξ (Plb. 9.27.4); Bulloch 1985a, 152 n. 1. Nic. seems to have in mind a single, separate rock which happens to have some cleft and can be used as a vessel. But the adj. is less suitable here than in either Theocritus or Apollonius, as not any rock with a cleft will do. Gow & Scholfield's translation ("a hollow stone") is closer to a regular stone mortar, but does not convey the meaning of ῥωγάς accurately. Perhaps Nic. wanted to use the adj., with its epic ring, despite the lack of accuracy its use entails. If he had both previous instances in mind, his imitation is a marked reversal: not only does Nic. place the combination at line-end (as opposed to Apollonius and Theocritus, who place it at the beginning of the line), but he also leaves out the preposition. The tripartite division in this line into σφέλας, ὅλμος and ῥωγὰς πέτρα, separated by the repeated ἤ, is thus marked by the varied reminiscence of each element: reuse of a distinct Homerism, an element from ordinary diction, and an echo from Hellenistic poetry.

***645–655 Root of* Eryngo*, Bearsfoot, Campanula, Field Basil, Anise***

The next recipe, although similar to the previous ones, ends with a reference to countering the venomous bites of scorpions and spiders, the two main categories of poisonous animals treated in the first half of the second part of the poem (715 ff.). As the part on recipes for snakebites is gradually coming to an end, the poet subtly prepares his addressees for the subject matter of the rest of the poem by looking forward, yet without giving too much emphasis; for the technique see Introduction 5.7.

645 **ἠρύγγοιο:** 'eryngo'.

**ἀνθήεντος:** for Nic.'s preference for coining adj.'s in -εις see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2. Enumerations of plants, skilful though they may be, are poetically not

very exciting by themselves. Therefore the poet makes sure to add sufficient decorative adj.'s, which may have some point in identification, but also add to the poetic register of the composition.

**ἀκάνθου:** 'bearsfoot'.

**647** **ἀμφοῖιν:** only here. For the (pseudo-)archaic use of the dual see 231 n. and Introduction 6.3.

**ἐρίνου:** 'campanula', or perhaps some kind of basil.

**648** **λάζεο:** see 108 n.

**649** **σπέραδος … Νεμεαῖον … σελίνου:** the *hypallage* creates a marked variation from the previous line, whose contents are similar. For *variatio* (σπέραδος for σπερμεῖον or σπέρμα) as a stylistic device see Introduction 6.10. The connection between celery and Nemea is a cultural one, as the victors of the Nemean games were typically crowned with chaplets of wild celery; cf. Pi. *N.* 4.88. As Callimachus' praise of Berenice's victory at the Nemean games seems to have been a celebrated part of the *Aetia* (frr. 54–60j = *SH* 254–269), it is not unlikely that such an association, connecting the plant to the town of Nemea, is on Nic.'s mind here.

**ἀειφύλλοιο:** 'evergreen', a decorative adj., but also a technical turn for non-deciduous plants, as is clear from Arist. *GA* 783b10 and Thphr. *CP* 1.107.

**650** **ἀννήσοιο:** 'anise'.

**651** **ὁλκήεσσαν:** another Nicandrean coinage, here and in 908; see Introduction 6.2.

**652** **ὀργάζοιο:** yet another synonym for kneading or mixing, cf. φύρω (507, 593, 693, 932), κεάζω (644), ψώχω (629)/σώχω (590, 696), ταράσσω (109, 665, 936, 956), ἐνθρύπτω (81, 655), τρίβω (87), ἐν(ι)τρίβω (527, 539, 597) and κατατρίβω (85). For Nic.'s use of *variatio* as a stylistic device see Introduction 6.10.

**653** **τύμμα:** three similar afflictions are mentioned in 653–654 (viz. of snakes, scorpions and spiders) but Nic. carefully avoids repetition. This is achieved through (i) the use of synonyms (σίνος, τύμμα, δάχμα), (ii) variation in phrasing

(separating the gen. ἐχίων and φάλαγγος by means of the adjectival σκορπιόεν in the middle), (iii) variation between the sg. φάλαγγος and the plur. ἐχίων, and (iv) through the addition of ὀλοόν in the case of σίνος.

654 **σκορπιόεν:** descriptions of scorpions and the wounds they cause will be treated from 770 onward. Although a scorpion was mentioned in the proem in relation to the death of Orion (14), this is the first line where the poet specifically talks about curing wounds caused by scorpions. As such, this line looks forward to the accounts of both scorpions and spiders and gives the external audience a preview of, or at least a clue to the subject matter of the rest of the poem; cf. Introduction 5.7. The same literary technique is found in the *Works and Days*, where the poet establishes connections between different parts of the poem by unobtrusively looking forward and backward; see Lardinois 1998. Within the description of 653–654, the two new topics (i.e. scorpions and spiders) are placed in marked positions, framing the hexameter to draw attention; cf. Introduction 6.8.

**δάχματ':** see 119 n.

**ἐπαλθήσαιο:** a compound only found here, and in *Al.* 395 and 614. Coining compounds is typical of Nic.'s grandiose style, in which terseness and perspicuity generally yield to poetic moment based on lexical weightiness; cf. 181, 194, 412, 442, 541, 660.

655 **ὀδελοῦ:** see 93 n.

### *656–665 Differents Kinds Of Thistle*

The next recipe treats two different types of thistle. According to Schneider (1962, 39) these lines are part of the previous description, but the mention of wine in 655 seems to indicate that the previouse recipe ends there. Just as in some earlier descriptions of plants, we see some personification. Where we earlier saw a plant 'delighting' in water (60–62), here the thistle is said to be 'proud of its leaves' (661), whereas another prefers dark places and 'shuns' the sun (660).

656 **χαμαίλεον:** 'thistle'.

**ὀρφνόν:** 'dark'. Although the only other instance of the adj. is a comp. in Nic. fr. 74.61 G-S, its abscence from the scholia suggests that its meaning was unproblematic in later times. Its relation to the less rare adj. ὀρφναῖος (Homer, tragedy)

shows that unique as the coinage may be it cannot be considered particularly abstruse.

**657** **ὠπήν:** apart from *Al.* 377, only found in A.R. 3.821 and 908, in the combination εἰς ὠπήν, 'face to face'. Here the rare noun is used to express the plant's appearance in anthropomorphic terms; cf. ἦτρον in 595.

**ζοφοείδελος:** only here, a recherché variant of the common ζόφερος, and a variation of ζοφοείδης, which Nic. already used in 256.

**658** **σκολύμῳ:** 'golden thistle'.

**χαίτην:** see 65 n.

**659** **αἴθαλος:** another case of an apparent incongruence (see 172 n.), as we would expect a fem. ending. This is, however, the only instance of the adjectival use of αἴθαλος, which is normally used as a noun ('soot', 'thick smoke'), next to the regular adj. αἰθαλόεις, on which see 566 n.

**660** **φυξήλιος:** only here. The active aspect of the adj. suggests that the plant longs to shun the sun, be it in under mountain spurs (κνημοῖς | σκοιοῖς) or in dark glades (νεμέεσσι). Instead of simply telling us where such a plant is likely to be found, Nic. gives us the impression it is the plant's own choice to reside in dark places such as mountains and glens. The plant is thus portrayed as having desires of its own, as in 62, 138 and 538, where plants are given human emotions in the same way. For Nic.'s portrayal of plants as human beings see Introduction 8.1.

**661** **δήεις:** see 100 n.

**πετάλοισιν ἀγαυρόν:** the only two previous instances of the adj. ἀγαυρός are Hes. *Th.* 832 (of a bull, proud of his might), and Hdt. 7.57 (of Xerxes), although the variant without the prothetic alpha is more common. The adj. expresses an emotion that is either human (as in Hdt.), or is a projection of a human emotion on an animal (as in Hes.). Here, as in earlier instances, the projection of a human emotion is extended to a plant, which is said to be proud of its leaves. For the portrayal of plants showing human qualities see Introduction 8.1.

**662** **μέσσῃ δ' ἐν κεφαλὴ δύεται:** referring to a plant's top as its head—a somewhat anthropomorphic approach to floral descriptions—is not new, cf. Ar. *Pl.* 178 (of a garlic), Thphr. *HP* 9.8.2 (of a poppy). Nic.'s descriptions of plants do, however, bear resemblance to his descriptions of snakes, e.g. 167, μέσσα κάρη … ἀείρει, where we find the same idea of a head in the middle, distinct from the surrounding coil underneath. The same parallel, but put more explicit, is found in 642. Here, however, the head is said to sink into the middle, instead of rising above it.

**πεδόεσσα:** only here, as a variant of πεδιεινός ('flat, level'). It is probably derived from ἀρπεδόεσσα, which was coined by Antimachus, whose liking for adj.'s in -όεις is often imitated by Nic.; see Introduction 6.5. Whereas the head of the viper's bugloss is said to rise like a snake, here we find the opposite, i.e. the plant presses itself low 'to the ground' (πέδον), which is in fact another resemblance of the snake's appearance.

**μολοβρή:** the exact meaning is unclear. Σ *Ther.* 662a (ταπεινή) suggests 'resting on the ground', which accords with πεδόεσσα, whereas Jacques' emendation μολυβρή suggests a reference to the lead-coloured appearance of the thistle's flowers. This is, however, problematic, as it implies that Nic. distinguishes between two kinds of thistle by calling one ζοφοείδελος (657), and the other 'lead-coloured', whereas 256 (χροιὴν δ' ἄλλοτε μὲν μολίβου ζοφοειδέος ἴσχει) shows that the two qualifications can hardly be used to make a clear distinction between the appearance of the two kinds.

**663** **ὑπαργήεσσα:** only here. According to Σ *Ther.* 663a ὑπόλευκος ('whitish') or λευκή. As usual, Nic. prefers to use compound adj.'s to indicate colours, e.g. ἀργίλιψ (213), χολοίβαφος (444), λευκανθής (530), ζοφοείδελος (657), ὑπαργήεις (663), μεσόχλοος (753) etc.; on colour terms in the *Theriaca* see in particular Papadopoulou 2009. Moreover, the juxtaposition of two compound adj.'s adds to an embellished poetic style.

**μελίζωρος:** another rare adj. Apart from two occurrences in *Al.* 205 and 351, its only earlier instance is found in the only line transmitted of the third century BCE poet Phaedimus, Δουράτεον σκύφος εὐρὺ μελιζώροιο ποτοῖο (*SH* 669 = Ath. 11.498e). The lack of context does not allow to decide whether the adj. is used literally ('a drink of pure honey') or metaphorically, but the latter is more probable, considering the wide range of metaphorical adj.'s formed with μέλι, e.g. μελίβρομος (of an *aulos*, Arch. *AP* 7.696 = *GPh* 3692), μελιγαθής (of water, Pi. fr. 198), μελίγδουπος (of poets, Pi. *N.* 11.18), μελίγηρυς (of a voice, *Od.* 12.187),

μελιηδής (of sleep, *Od.* 19.551) etc. Here the adj. simply expresses sweetness, transporting a sense that perhaps comes from a sympotic context to the realm of nature.

**665 ὑδάτεσσι:** a rare epic plur., also used in *Al.* 112, 504, frr. 70.8 and 78.5 G-S. Nic. may have picked it up from Arat. 943, or perhaps from A.R. 2.939, 3.860. This is a post-Homeric Aeolicism, analogous to ὀππάτεσσι (Sapph. fr. 31.11 Voigt), or ἀρμάτεσσ' (Sapph. and Alc. inc. auct. 21 Voigt); for other Hellenistic examples cf. γονάτεσσι (Theoc. 16.11), and στομάτεσσι (*Al.* 210, 240, 263, 339 377, Call. fr. 278.3 Pf.).

**ταράξας:** see 652 n.

***666–675 Alcibius' Root***

After the treatment of the plant known as Alcibius' bugloss in 541–549, here we are presented with another herb named after the unknown Alcibius. He is once again portrayed as the plant's πρῶτος εὑρετής, although it is Alcibius' dog which by chance discovers the plant; see Introduction 8.3. Alcibius is, however, rightly credited as having discovered the curative powers of the herb, as it is he who realises that the dog's ailment is cured because of the plant. It is remarkable that someone who figures twice in a poem as the *Theriaca* is not known from other sources. It is almost as if Nic. eagerly wants to introduce this figure into mythology by pretending he is already part of it. Alternatively it can be suggested that Nic. is making up etymologies for the two existing herbs named after Alcibius by creating aetiological myths. In this light it is striking that the snakes responsible for the bites (a male viper and a female viper) are just variants of the same phenomenon, rather than proper species. Nic. seems to have introduced these few variations on purpose (Alcibius ~ Alcibius' dog, a female viper ~ a male viper, Alcibius' bugloss ~ Alcibius' herb, hunting ~ sleeping); they differ enough to be credible, yet resemble each other enough to show they are a pair. Alcibius, as an enigmatic character with no history in literature, is in some ways reminiscent of Vergil's Aristaeus, as portrayed in the fourth book of the *Georgics* (4.315–558). Although the figure of Aristaeus itself is not new (cf. Pi. *P.* 9. 65, A.R. 2.506), his depiction as a mythical farmer, *primus inventor*, and character figuring in a didactic poem is not unlike Nic.'s Alcibius. The latter seems to be introduced for the occasion, just like Vergil adapts the mythical Aristaeus to suit his needs, by moulding him into a character that fits both the context of the *Georgics* and the natural setting evoked through the text.

The discovery of the root of Alcibius is caused by the attack of a snake on one of Alcibius' dogs, which gets bitten in the tear-gland of the corner

of its eye. Such a level of non-functional detail is remarkable, and we may tentatively surmise the influence of contemporary medical literature here, reflecting recent discoveries related to the anatomy of the eye. Furthermore the passage shows some elements we have come to expect from Nic., such as the assignment of a Homeric heroic epithet to an animal, and the poetical use of a rarer adj. where a more common topographical marker would have sufficed.

Just like in earlier passages (458–462, 633–635) a particular region, in this case the Troad, is descibed periphrastically through the combination of references to single topographic elements.

**666 ἄλλην … ποίην:** the *hyperbaton* here is not only an imitation of 541, where the first root of Alcibius' is treated, but can also be considered functional, as it underlines the fact that the poet will now treat an different Alcibian root. Although the line is reminiscent of 541, the differences betray Nic.'s penchant for *variatio*, e.g. the alternative gen. Ἀλκιβίου/ Ἀλκιβίοιο, the choice of verb, and the use of ῥίζαν/ποίην, which appear to be synonyms.

**φερώνυμον:** this echo of 501, where a similar aetiology is introduced, is not only marked by the use of φερώνυμον in the same *sedes*, but also by the imitated alliteration of Κενταύρου Κρονίδαο in ἄλλην δ' Ἀλκιβίοιο. Of the Hellenistic poets only Lycophron uses the adj. (164, 599, 1081), but although it is a marker of aetiology in itself, Lycophron does not elaborate on the origin of names derived from certain persons or events.

**667 νέκταρι:** as Spatafora (2007a, 163) points out, in the Hellenistic era the noun is used commonly for wine (as in Call. fr. 399.2 Pf.), adding to οἶνος (591, 624, 929), οἴνη (e.g. 507, 713, 913), and μέθυ (582, 619) used elsewhere in the *Theriaca*.

**668 σκοπέλοισι:** originally watch-places (σκοπέω) on mountains, but the word is often just a synonym for cliff or crag, without the older connotation (e.g. Hdt. 2.29 Ar. *Ra.* 471, *Nu.* 273), which is how Nic. uses the word. Occasionally the older meaning is still relevant in Hellenistic Greek, as in A.R. 3.1276; Hunter 1989, 240.

**Φαλακραίοισιν:** according to Σ *Ther.* 668–672, Φαλάκρα ἀκρωτήριον τῆς Τροίας, ἢ τῆς ἐν Τροίᾳ παρακειμένης Ἴδης, ἔπει καὶ τέσσαρές εἰσι ἄκραι, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα Λέκτον, Πέργαμον, Φαλάκρα καὶ Ἴδη. The name opens another short series of toponyms (Phalacra, Crymna, Grasus), reminiscent of earlier combinations of

such names, serving both as a periphrasis of a particular region (cf. 458–462 and 633–635), and as a display of the poet's learnedness; see Introduction 8.5.

**ἐπακτῆρ:** 'hunter', a Homerism (*Il.* 17.135, *Od.* 19.435) picked up by other Hellenistic poets as well, cf. Call. *Jov.* 77, A.R. 1.625, Lyc. 109; see McLennan 1977, 114 and De Stefani 2005, 165 n. 85.

**669–670 ἵνα θ' Ἵππου | λειμῶνες:** Σ *Ther.* 668–672 suggest Nic. is talking about the Trojan Horse here. Gow & Scholfield admit that, although the *scholia* are probably just guessing, they may just be right, as Nic. seems to be describing the plain of Troy here. Although in this case the λειμῶνες have nothing to do with horses, the choice of words is reminiscent of 634–635, where real horses are said to be grazing the meadows of Cilbis.

**670 σκυλάκεσσιν Ἀμυκλαίῃσι:** Amyclae is a Laconian town, just south of Sparta. Here the adj. seems to be a recherché variant of 'Spartan', not necessary used with reference to Amyclae in particular; cf. 904, where Amyclae is applied more particularly. Using Amyclae for Sparta in poetic diction is paralleled by Dionysius Periegetes in 13, 213, 377, 413 and 860; see Brodersen 1994, 123. The adj. denotes the well-known Spartan hunting-dogs, which became proverbial later on (cf. Thomas 1988b, 48 ad Verg. *G.* 3.43–44), but seems to have been standard already in X. *Cyn.* 10.4; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 183.

**671 κνυζηθμῷ:** a rare noun, expressing the whining of a dog (κνυζέομαι); according to Heubeck (1989, 272) the noun is onomatopaeic. Nic. seems to follow Apollonius, who imitates *Od.* 16.163 in 3.884; both Nic. and Apollonius employ the same case and number as Homer, and use the word in the same Homeric *sedes*. In Apollonius the word is used of dogs, which are said to fawn (κνυζηθμῷ σαίνουσιν) and make sounds in joy and awe at the arrival of Artemis, whereas in Homer Odysseus' dogs are said to whine out of fear at the sight of Athena. Nic., recognising the noun's specific use of dogs, adds another cause to the Homeric and Apollonian instances of whining out of awe or fear, i.e. whining because of pain.

Here we have another instance of embellished composition, approaching a Golden Line, though lacking the verb in the middle (on which see 339 n. and Introduction 6.8). Such embellishment, displaying grace of composition at a moment where the snake's assault triggers the dog's shrill cry, shows a marked contrast between poetical aesthetics and the harsh reality of pain, a contrast not unlike that presented in 339.

**οὔλῳ:** here of the fearful death-cry of the bitten whelp, unlike in 233, where the adj. is probably a lexical variant of ὅλος; see however 233 n. Jacques (2002, 20) points at the three different meanings of οὖλος in Nic., viz. 'whole' (= ὅλος), 'sharp' (here) and 'destructive' (e.g. 565, 759). The variant in this line seems to go back to similar use in *Il.* 17.756 and 759.

**ἐπήϊσε:** 'discovered by chance'. Nic.'s use here (with τήν in 668 as object) is far from the original meaning 'hear', as Alcibius deduces the root's curative powers from observing his dog's behaviour. Elsewhere the verb is used of understanding (e.g. S. *Aj.* 1263) or possession of knowledge (e.g. Pl. *Tht.* 145d), whereas Alcibius' discovery of his eponymous root is entirely fortuitous, and requires little understanding, let alone knowledge.

**θυμολέοντος:** an epic epithet, used by Homer of various heroes, of Achilles in *Il.* 7.228 (cf. Hes. *Th.* 1007), of Odysseus in *Od.* 4.724, 814, and of Heracles in *Od.* 11.267. It is used for Patroclus in Ar. *Ra.* 1041. Why does Nic. qualify this particular dog as 'lion-hearted', even though the only thing we hear about it is its piercing whining when bitten by a snake, which is hardly a sign of bravery? First of all such use is not un-Nicandrean, as the use of lofty epithets to embellish animals—or even plants—seems to be a trademark of Nic. A second approach shows Nic.'s comical side, as perhaps the poet is using the epithet tongue-in-cheek: both the application of such an epithet to a dog and the particular use of the epithet in this context can be considered comical, despite the teacher's grave pose that is maintained throughout the poem; see Introduction 8.4. We do not need, however, to consider such use of the epithet comical per se as perhaps the poet expresses his admiration for the brave dog that manages to save himself from his plight. Alternatively it can be suggested that by reminiscence of heroes of old, through the use of an epithet interlaced with this era, a transposition to the era of early epic is created, by which the audience considers this episode of Alcibius's hunting as very old. This is necessary to make the story of Alcibius as a πρῶτος εὑρετής (again, cf. 541–549) more plausible, as it ranks him next to the illustrious Cheiron (500–508).

**672 μεταλλεύων αἰγὸς ῥόθον:** ῥόθος is known as a Boeotian gloss (Plu. *in Hes.* 13). As Jacques (2002, 186) points out, it does not mean 'mountain-path' (LSJ), or goat's 'trail' (Gow & Scholfield) but refers to the traces left by goats on the path. This solves the awkward and apparently superfluous juxtaposition to στίβος: Gow & Scholfield's reading implies that there are two paths next to each other. Additionally, it makes more sense for a dog to follow the traces of animals, than to follow a designated path for goats. The verb μεταλλεύω, literally 'mining', is

explained here as 'exploring', but 'searching for' seems to be more apt: Alcibius' dog is not engaged in exploration in general, but knows precisely what it is looking for; cf. Leon. Tarent. *AP* 6.302.5 (*HE* 2195), for the same nuance: in Leonidas' epigram mice are not just exploring the poet's frugal lodgings, but are searching for food. Both instances of metaphorical usage thus show a closer relation to the verb's original meaning of 'mining', i.e. digging for particular substances, not merely exploring, which has an undertone of curiosity.

**673 κανθῷ ἐνὶ ῥαντῆρι:** 'in the tear-gland of the corner of its eye'. The level of detail, in itself not necessary in this context, is striking and may well be due to medical and anatomical observations in the Hellenistic era. Observations like these triggered interest in such details in certain Alexandrian writers; cf. Most (1981, 188–196), Zanker (1983, 131–132; 1987, 99–100) and Hunter (1989, 180) for such reflections in Callimachus and Apollonius. ῥαντήρ (ῥαίνω) is not found earlier, but ῥαντήριον exists as v.l. in A. *Ag*. 1092, although not with the specific meaning of the sprinkling of tears.

**τυπήν:** see 2 n.

**674 ῥεῖα:** grammatically the adv. qualifies κατέβρυξεν in the next line, but the implication of the word lingers in the subsequent main clause. The adv. does not so much express the ease with which the dog chews on the herb (which does not come as surprising information), but the ease with which the dog escapes death. This is a clear reminiscence of the opening word of the poem (programmatic in turn), where the relation between ease and healing by means of cures was already established. The repetition of ῥεῖα here is therefore an indirect repetition of both the impression of usefulness and the impression of truthfulness of the poet's lessons.

**ποίης:** see 479 n.

**675 ὄλεθρον:** a marked Homerism (80×), although the noun is widely used in poetry in general. Its usual (though not only) *sedes* is at line-end (65× in Homer), a practice reflected in Apollonius (10×, 9× at line-end); cf. 196 and 734 for Nic.'s observance of the tradition. Here originality is achieved by the new and unique combination of ὄλεθρον with φοινόν (on which see 146 n.), in which the poet thus varies on the standard combinations of αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον and λυγρὸν ὄλεθρον used frequently in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. At the same time Nic. varies on Apollonius, who never puts such adj.'s directly before the noun.

### *676–688 Bark of the Castor-Tree, Balm-Leaves, Heliotrope, Navelwort, Bindweed, Hart's-Tongue, Phlegyan All-Heal*

The next compound recipe occasions two more brief references to mythology. In 679 the paths of the sun, identified as the son of Hyperion, explain the etymology of the heliotrope. The Phlegyan all-heal in 685 leads to a description of Heracles and the Hydra. As we have come to expect from Nic. the story is told briefly and elliptically. We are to deduce that Iphicles got wounded and needed treatment after Heracles' battle with the Hydra. Although the story itself seems hardly relevant to Nic.'s report, and is merely triggered by the treatment of the Phlegyan all-heal in 685, Nic. has created another vista to an unrelated story in which snakes play a role; cf. the unnecessary, but thematically ornamental appearance of Cadmus and Harmonia as snakes in 608–609. The addition of the story thus serves a threefold purpose: (i) the incorporation of another (e.g. 309–319, 345–358, 608–609) thematically related myth dealing with a snake, keeping in mind that the Lernaean Hydra is technically a female ὕδρος, 'water-snake', (ii) the double etymology of 'Phlegyan all-heal' (see 687–688 n.), (iii) the discovery of Phlegyan all-heal by Paieon; see also Introduction 5.7.

676 **κρότωνος:** 'castor-oil tree'.

677 **συμμίγδην:** see 21 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**μελισσοφύτοιο:** perhaps 'balm' of some kind.

**δασείης:** the adj. indicates individual plants or species full of leaves (cf. Hdt. 3.32, of θρίδαξ, 'lettuce'), although it can also qualify bushes or thickets that are thick with leaves when found together, creating a dense wall of foliage. The adj. is also used as 'hairy' or 'shaggy', either of human skin (δέρμα, *Od.* 14.51), or that of an animal (X. *An.* 5.4.12.).

678 **ἠελίοιο τροπαῖς ἰσώνυμον ἔρνος:** the *heliotrope*, already mentioned by Theophrastus as τὸ ἡλιοτρόπιον (*HP* 7.3.1). Although the plant's nomenclature offers a good opportunity to point at its etymology (cf. ὄνου πετάλειον in 628 and the explanation of ἐχίειον in 642; cf. Introduction 6.6), the poet first comes up with an alternative, somewhat riddling, poetic circumscription, pointing out the fact that the plant's name 'is the same as the turnings of the sun', i.e. as a celestial phenomenon. The rare adj. ἰσώνυμος (previously only in Pi. *O.* 9.64), apparently distinct from φερώνυμος (which points at a direct causal relation and would as such introduce an etymology, cf. 501 and 666), creates the possibility to surprise the reader with an alternate periphrasis; within a section

that consists mainly of enumeration, an opportunity for poetic variation is not neglected. The phrasing does thus not refer (yet) to the fact that the heliotrope's leaves turn towards the sun, but plays on lines as e.g. *Od.* 15.404, τροπαὶ ἠελίοιο (referring to a point on the horizon), Hes. *Op.* 479, ἠελίοιο τροπῇς (referring to solstice, cf. *Op.* 564 and 663, μετὰ τροπὰς ἠελίοιο), and Arat. 499, θέρεος δέ οἱ ἐν τροπαί εἰσιν.

**ἔρνος:** although the noun clearly refers to the plant here, the initial ambiguity, caused by the fact that Helios is himself the ἔρνος ('offspring', 'son') of Hyperion (679), may well be an intentional instance of παρὰ προσδοκίαν; cf. 815 n.

**679–680** **ᾗ θ' Ὑπεριονίδαο ... | τεκμαίρει:** the periphrasis of the previous line is extended by a relative clause in which the etymology of the plant's name is revealed after all. The use of the neutral θ' here, instead of a causal conjunction, is relevant, as it underlines the use of ἰσώνυμον in the previous line: Nic. makes two separate statements ('the plant has the same name as the sun's turnings'; 'it also marks the path of Hyperion's retreating son') and the lack of a causal relation expressed in ἰσώνυμον is maintained through the use of θ'. The poet thus refrains from stating the obvious and chooses to present his addressee with a surprising variation.

The fem. rel. pronoun, transmitted in the mss and retained both by Gow & Scholfield and Jacques is awkard, being incongruent with the neut. ἔρνος. The pronoun suggests the ellipsis of ἡ *ἡλιοτροπή or some other fem. noun to indicate the plant, as is reflected by both Gow & Scholfield's and Jacques' translation. What we have here, however, could well be a veiled reference to the myth related to the *heliotrope*. The story, known only from Ovid (*Met.* 4.206–270), tells of the unrequited love of the nymph Clytie (probably to be indentified with the nymph of the same name in Hes. *Th.* 352) for Helios, who chooses Leucothea instead. The jealous Clytie reveals the affair to Leucothea's father, who buries his daughter alive. As a result the eternal scorn of Helios causes Clytie to wilt from sorrow and turn into the heliotrope; see Gantz 1993, 34. If Nic. knew the story (which may well have featured in his *Heteroeumena*, to be adapted by Ovid for his *Metamorphoses*), this may have caused him to refer to the plant as female, thus using a fem. pronoun.

**τεκμαίρει:** the active is very rare (cf. Pi. *O.* 6.73; *N.* 6.8).

**679** **Ὑπεριονίδαο**: the patronymic is Homeric (*Od.* 12.176), with a few other instances in early epic (Hes. *Th.* 1011, *h.Cer.* 74). Here the stately seven-syllable word is matched by the five-syllable compound παλινστρέπτοιο (probably a

coinage): not only does the poet confer grandeur to the line by using long, lofty words, but he also achieves an aesthethically pleasing composition through the collocation of three words of evenly decreasing length (respectively seven, five, and three syllables).

**παλινστρέπτοιο:** the adj. is only found here; the later lexical variant παλίστρεπτος is found in Maximus' Περὶ Καταρχῶν (fourth century CE; see Zito 2012), who uses it of Selene (80), and of the path of the zodiacal Ram (594), ἐνὶ Κριοῖο παλιστρέπτοιο κελεύθῳ, possibly inspired by Nic.'s line.

**680 τεκμαίρει:** the act. use of τεκμαίρομαι is a post-Homeric oddity, apparently restricted to poetry; cf. Pi. *O.* 6.73, *N.* 6.8, A. *Pr.* 605 and Arat. 18. Nic.'s use of the verb here shows a slight twist of the physical reality, as the plant is not said to follow the movement of the sun, but to 'show' it. The poet has thus given the plant a more active stance, not unlike his personified descriptions of plants elsewhere; see Introduction 8.1. Moreover, Nic.'s portrayal of a plant as indicating the path of a celestial sign is in a way an inversion of Aratus, who repeatedly tries to show us that celestial signs are indicators of natural phenomena on Earth.

**ἶσον:** congruent to ἔρνος, after the odd syntactical digression to the fem. rel. pronoun ἥ in the previous line. The likeness expressed by the adj. is to the behaviour of the leaves of the olive, not to the optical similarity between the heliotrope and the olive themselves.

**681 κοτυληδόνος:** 'navelwort'.

**ἀνὰ κρυμόν:** only here, expressing 'throughout the frosty winter months', rather than indicating a short spell of frost, as becomes clear in the next line.

**682 ὀλοφυδνά:** three times in Homer (*Il.* 5.683, 23.102, *Od.* 19.362), in the fixed phrase ἔπος δ' ὀλοφυδνὸν ἔειπε. Apart from Quintus, who revived the adj. by using it in a new but similar fixed phrase (3.462, 5.531, 13.271), the only other instance is Anyt. *AP* 7.486.1 (*HE* 680 = Geogh. 5), although latter instance is adverbial. Here Nic. has turned the active 'lamenting' into the passive 'lamentable', not of χίμετλα themselves, but of lamentations resulting from the pain caused by χίμετλα, 'chilblains', here emphatically postponed until the end of the line. Although latter affliction is of course unpleasant, the use of the Homeric adj. is almost comical, as it establishes a connection between the heroic world of brutal death and the domestic realm of petty inconveniences;

cf. Nic.'s use of the Homeric epithet θυμελέων for Alcibius' whimpering dog in 671 and Introduction 8.4. Such comical clashes of everyday humble life and epic-heroic diction or setting are not uncommon in Hellenistic poetry, with Theoc. 24 as the classic example.

**διήφυσε:** previously only in *Od.* 19.450, in the same *sedes*; other instances of the rare verb διαφύσσω are *Od.* 16.110 (διαφυσσόμενον, of wine being drawn off), and *Il.* 13.508 (*tmesis*). If Homer is Nic.'s source here, as seems likely, we have an interesting parallel of the verb's use. In Homer the verb is used in the famous story of the scar, of a boar wounding Odysseus above the knee by thrusting its tusk into the hero's flesh, ὁ δέ μιν φθάμενος ἔλασεν σῦς | γουνὸς ὕπερ, πολλὸν δὲ διήφυσε σαρκὸς ὀδόντι (19.449–450). Whereas in the Homeric passage the verb expresses a tearing of the skin, combined by flesh (or blood) being drawn out of the skin, Nic. uses the exact same verb of drawing chilblains out of the skin. Just as in Homer the image of drawing (normally of wine being drawn off "from a larger jar into a smaller vessel", Russo etc. 1992, 98) is transferred from wine to flesh. As such, the use of this particular verb and its reference to the Homeric line underlines the epic aggrandisement expressed by ὀλοφυδνά; see Introduction 7.3.

**χίμετλα:** for the expression of feet 'broken' by chilblains, cf. Hippon. 34.4 *IEG*[2] (43 Degani) ὥς μοι μὴ χίμετλα ῥήγνυται. This is the second time the poet gives a cure for chilblains; in 380–383 he tells us that the affliction, when occurring on hands suffering from the cold, can be cured by the skin of the *amphisbaena*. For the repetition of such elements as a compositional technique, interlacing the two parts of the poem, see Introduction 5.6.

**683** **δήποτε:** 'or', found also in 866, and in *Al.* 133 and 383; LSJ's 'sometimes' makes little sense, as there is no temporal aspect to Nic.'s prescriptions at all: why would the teacher tell his pupil to take a certain ingredient at one time, but at a different moment another? It seems thus that in the *Theriaca* δήποτε is used as an exact synonym of the equally idiosyncratically used ἄλλοτε in 82 (on which see n.) and 535, i.e. as an alternative for ἤ; cf. Introduction 6.9.

**βλωθροῖο:** probably 'tall', a rare adj., used for a pine (πίτυς) in *Il.* 13.390 (= 16.483), and for a pear-tree (ὄγχνη) in *Od.* 24.234. The adj. is not used again until the Hellenistic period, when its reputation as an apt adj. for plants and trees is confirmed by Arat. 1089 (of corn-stalks, ποίη) and A.R. 4.1476 (of a white poplar, ἀχερωίς). Nic. seems to be aware of this limited scope of βλω-

θρός and consequently applies it to πυρῖτις, 'bindweed'; later epic authors follow the tradition, cf. Opp. *H.* 4.293 (of a fir), and Q.S. 8.204 (of a fir or pine). Alternative interpretations of the adj. are given by Livrea (1973a, 414), but, as Kidd (1997, 556) shows, in the case of Arat. 1089 'tall' is a logical interpretation.

**πυρίτιδος:** 'bindweed'.

**684** **σκολοπενδρείοιο:** 'heart's tongue'.

**685** **ἄγρει:** see 534 n.

**πάνακες:** see 565 n. The idea that πάνακες is an actual plant, and not merely the periphrasis of another plant (unlike the poetic use of πανάκειον in 508, and πανάκτειον in 626) seems to be confirmed here; if πάνακες Φλεγυήϊον was not used here as a discernible species, the didactic fiction of practicable instruction would be disrupted.

**Φλεγυήϊον:** either a geographical indication or a reference to Paieon's origin. The former would be rather vague, as Gow & Scholfield (1953, 183) point out, since Phlegya is not only the name of a Boeotian town, but also found as the name of a people associated with Boeotia, Thessaly and Phocis, and even Epidauros and Arcadia. This may not be relevant to the plant's name if it is ossified, although for the addressee lack of further indication of the plant's properties may complicate identification anyway. Alternatively, White (1987, 45) explains the adj. as referring to Phlegyas, who is Asclepius' grandfather in some traditions (*Homeric Hymn to Asclepius* 16.2–3, [Apollod.] 3.118 W. (3.10.3 F.), Σ Pi. *P.* 3.8.14), Coronis being Asclepius' mother. If White is correct then Paieon in 686 is clearly merely a synonym of Asclepius.

**ὅρρά τε πρῶτος:** the construction, comprising πρῶτος and connecting an aetiology to the plant by means of a relative clause, triggers a reference to the topos of the πρῶτος εὑρετής; see 500 n. For other instances of the same topos cf. 492, 500, 541. Just as in 500, where πρώτην is emphatically placed at the opening of the line, here its position at line-end draws the attention it needs, being an aetiological marker; see Introduction 8.3.

**686** **Παιήων:** for the figure of Paieon see 439 n. and Introduction 8.3. For the compositional technique of recurring elements in the two parts of the poem see Introduction 5.6.

**Μέλανος ποταμοῦ παρὰ χεῖλος:** as Gow & Scholfield (1953, 183) point out, "Melas is a common river-name, one river so-called being near Trachis". As the setting introduced here opens a myth no particular location is needed, and a standard river-name is perhaps chosen for convenience, leading away from the question of exact identification. But Nic. may have a particular Melas in mind, which is likely to have a connection with Phlegya, in which case the reference shows a learned detail about where exactly Heracles fought the Hydra: at Lerna (to which Phlegya and Melas would be learnedly alluding), or at some other location, in which case Nic. is showing a learned variant of the well-known story; cf. Introduction 8.5.

**παρὰ χεῖλος:** see 61 n.

**687 Ἀμφιτρυωνιάδαο:** throughout Greek literature considered to be a patronymic epithet of Heracles, but Nic.'s new application to Heracles' brother Iphicles is of course no less apt. In fact this designation suits Iphicles better, since he really is the son of Amphitryon, whereas Heracles is the son of Zeus. The surprising use of the patronymic is paired with the equally surprising appearance of Iphicles here, who is not usually considered Heracles' partner in killing the Hydra, but his son. The epithet is not found in Homer (cf. West 1966, 254), but Hes. *Th.* 317 has Ἀμφιτρυωνιάδης. The exact same form as Nic. has here, and in the same *sedes*, is only found in [Theoc.] 25.152, whose date is uncertain. This is the only instance of a single word filling up the entire hemistich, up to the trochaic caesura, although 679 and 684 are close competitors.

**θέρων:** according to LSJ to be interpreted as θεραπεύων here, although it is not clear whether θέρω is merely short for θεραπεύω (i.e. as a lexical variant), or just seems to *mean* 'heal' here, which is quite a stretch considering θέρω's normal meaning of 'heat'. Perhaps we are to understand that Paieon's medical assistance consisted of 'heating' Iphicles' wound (a process well-known to Nic. as it is described in 923–924), which would give an interesting parallel to the defeat of the Hydra. The latter is overcome by having its necks cauterised after the heads have been severed by Heracles. But even if such an interpretation does not add up, the use of the verb θέρω close to πυρακτέω in the next line does not seem to be a coincidence. For a combined etymologising reference of θέρων and ἐπυράκτεεν to πάνακες Φλεγυήϊον in 685 see 688 n.

**Ἰφικλέος:** as Gow & Scholfield (1953, 183) remark, Nic.'s choice for Heracles' brother Iphicles here is odd, considering the fact that elsewhere (e.g. Hes. *Th.* 317, [Hes.] *Sc.* 77, E. *Ion* 198) Iphicles' son Iolaus is mentioned as Heracles' assis-

tant; cf. Gantz 1993, 384–386. Iphicles is, however, mentioned as Heracles' partner in the Calydonian hunt ([Apollod.] 1.68 W. = 1.8 F.), which gives at least some plausibility concerning Heracles' unexpected companion here, although there is no evidence that Iphicles ever took part in Heracles' canonical labours. However, some traditions give Iphicles a role in other battles, e.g. Paus. 8.14.9, who tells us Iphicles was killed by the sons of Actor, when fighting with Heracles against Augias. He is also said to have joined Heracles in fighting the sons of Hippocoon (D.S. 4.33.6, [Apollod.] 2.7 F. = 2.145 W.). According to Walde (1998, 1098) the figure of Iphicles is used as a foil for Heracles' godlike powers, of which *Idyll* 24 seems a clear prefiguration. The fact that the story related in the twenty-fourth idyll deals with snakes too suggests that Nic. is thinking of Theocritus here. If the presence of Iphicles as a foil was widely felt to be relevant, Nic. gives a good example, as in the two lines devoted to Heracles' encounter with the Hydra their respective roles are clear: Iphicles gets wounded and needs to be ministered to, whereas Heracles performs his heroic feat by killing the Hydra.

**688** **ἐπυράκτεεν:** originally fire played no role whatsoever in the story of Heracles and the Hydra, and the element of the cauterising of the decapitated necks does not enter until the late sixth century; Gantz 1993, 385. In Nic.'s time the use of fire as a key element of the story had of course become much more canonical, and the poet is probably telling us the story as he can expect his audience to know it. According to Shechter (1975, 359–360) Nic.'s digression of Heracles' exploit here has an alternative function as it plays on a complex etymology for the name of the plant 'Phlegyan all-heal' (πάνακες Φλεγυήϊον). As Shechter points out, the verb πυρακτέω plays both on Phlegyan (πυρ- ~ φλεγ-) and 'all-healing' (ακ- ~ ακες). In addition, the same sort of allusion is made through θέρων in 687, which carries both the meaning of 'heating' and 'healing' (~ θεραπεύω); see 687 n.

### *689–699 Dried Marten's Flesh*

The next recipe consist solely of the detailed preparation of a marten. The passage is divided in two, with 695 in the middle, and describes two different parts of a procedure, viz. preparation of the ingredients (689–694), and a second preparation of the recipe (using prepared ingredients), when one is in immediate danger (695–699).

**689** **εἰ δέ:** see 57 n.

**γαλέης:** for the use of animals parts, such as the marten here, as ingredients, cf. 108–111 and 622–623.

**λαιδρήν:** a rare adj. (cf. *Al.* 563), previously only found in Call. frr. 75.4 Harder, κύον, κύον, ἴσχεο, λαιδρέ, | θυμέ, and 194.82 Pf. from the fourth iambus, λαιδρὴ κορώνη, κῶς τὸ χεῖλος οὐκ ἀλγεῖς; ('unashamed crow! How come your beak doesn't hurt?'). In both instances the adj. is used in a context where animal and human behaviour is blurred: in fr. 75.4 the poet urges himself to show constraint, and calls himself an impudent cur, whereas in fr. 194.82 we hear an olive-tree commenting on a crow, where both tree and crow are clearly portrayed as human interlocutors. If Nic. was aware of this connotation of the adj. in previous contexts it may explain his choice for it here, of a marten, said to be mischievous (showing a similar conflation of human and animal behaviour; cf. Introduction 8.1), and for *Al.* 563 where the adj. is applied to frogs (see 620 n.).

**690** **ἀποσκύλαιο:** for the *figura etymologica* (σκύλακας ... ἀποσκύλαιο), occasionally found in the *Theriaca*, see Introduction 6.6.

**691** **καρχαλέου:** the mss give καρχαλέος ('rough, fierce') and καρφαλέος ('parching, drying'); both make good sense. The former can arguably be preferred as a rarer, and thus more contrived, variant, suiting Nic.'s style. In Homer the adj. is used of a throat 'rough' with thirst (*Il.* 21.541, δίψῃ καρχαλέοι), a usage imitated by Apollonius in 4.1442 (δίψῃ καρχαλέος, also at line-opening); see Rengakos 1994, 101–102. The only other instance before Nic., however, is A.R. 3.1058 (καρχαλέοι κύνες, at line-opening), where the adj. is given the new meaning 'fierce'. Perhaps Nic. is playing on this innovation by using the same adj. in the same *sedes*, where we initially (after λάχνην in the previous line) get the impression that the adj. is qualifying the marten; only afterwards do we realise the adj. is part of a new word group, qualifying fire, and thus more or less returning to the Homeric use of dry heat. Nic. draws on both Homer and Apollonius, while coming up with a new context of the rare adj.

Jacques' emends the adj. to καρχαλέης, altering the congruity to ἀϋτμῆς. Although this makes good sense, and creates an aesthetically pleasing hyperbaton, the emendation is not necessary.

**693** **ἁλὸς δίοιο:** 'holy salt', perhaps a conflation of πάσσε δ' ἁλὸς θείοιο (*Il.* 9.214, same *sedes*), of salt, but with a synonymical adj., and the expression εἰς ἅλα δῖαν (*Il.* 2.152, 14.76, 15.161, 15.177 etc.) where the adj. δῖος is used, not, however, of ἅλς as meaning salt, but sea. The superfluous adj. here is thus not a sign of piety, but a comical allusion to a typical Homeric usage; see Introduction 8.4.

**τέρσαι:** see 96 n. The placement of the two imperat.'s give the line a chiastic effect, underlined by the central position of *καί*, dividing the line into two clear halves; for Nic.'s attention to such details see Introduction 6.8.

**694 ὠκὺς ἀίξας:** although the part. of ἀίσσω is found frequently in Homer, the masc. is never used at line-end. In fact, the only previous instance of ἀίξας in this particular *sedes* is Arat. 334, which ends in ὀξὺς ἀίξας, showing close verbal resemblance to Nic.'s ending. Moreover, the Aratean line describes the piercing heat emitted by Sirius, a star sometimes considered equivalent or closely connected to the sun (see 205 n.), or at any rate having the same effect as the burning sun. This corroborates Nic.'s borrowing from the *Phaenomena* here, used of the 'swift shafts' (Gow & Scholfield) of the sun. The verb has undergone an interesting development, apparently stemming from *Il.* 18.212, where it qualifies αὐγή (211) in a simile. This seems to be the only early instance where ἀίσσω is used of the movement of light, expressing the darting glare of fire beacons in the night. Aratus picks up the idea of light, but applies it to Sirius' shafts, which seem to be moving (ἀίξας) as the light is broken by the ranks of leaves on trees. Nic., in turn, retains the image of ἀίσσω being used for the heat of shafts of light from the sun, but moves aways from the emphasis on movement (cf. the leaves in Arat.) and therefore from the basic meaning of ἀίσσω.

**695 ἀλλ' ὁπόταν χρείω ... μογέοντα:** ἀλλ' marks the transition from the first to the second part: the procedure falls into two, viz. preparing a marten well in advance, and putting it to use when necessity strikes. Here we clearly see the difference, not always explicit in the *Theriaca*, between general preparations and what to do when one is actually bitten.

**κατεμπάζῃ:** a unique compound. Σ *Ther.* 695a (ἀλλ' ὁπόταν ἡ χρεία σε καταλαμβάνῃ καὶ κατεπείγῃ κάμνοντα ὑπὸ τῆς ἀλγηδόνος) takes it to be a synonym of καταλαμβάνω, 'seize', 'overtake', which makes good sense.

**696 σῶχε:** Ionian (cf. κατασώχω in Hdt. 4.75) for ψώχω, which is used as a purposeful metrical variant in 629. Nic.'s diction, being an epic amalgam of dialects, of course allows for such variants, used either for prosodical reasons or for the sake of *variatio*; see Introdcution 6.10. Here, as in 590, the Ionian form is used at line-opening, which suggest that the Ionic form is felt to be the standard, to which ψώχω is the metrically suitable exception. For the variety of what at least seem to be synonyms of the same action see 652 n.

**κνήστι:** ‘with a grater’. The only previous instance of this contracted dat. sg. is in *Il.* 11.639–640, ἐπὶ δ’ αἴγειον κνῆ τυρὸν | κνήστι χαλκείῃ. LSJ’s ‘cheese-grater’ is inferred from the Homeric passage, as the noun itself indicates a less specific device, similar to a κνηστήρ, of which κνῆστις is a lexical variant; see 85 n.

**σκελετόν:** ‘dried-up’. The adj. refers to the drying (τέρσαι) of the dead marten mentioned in 693, which needs to be dried before it can be put to use as an ingredient.

**δάκος:** see 115 n.

697 **στροφάλιγγα περιξήροιο γάλακτος:** a particularly wordy periphrasis for what simply seems to be a round cheese. The simile seems a nod to *Il.* 11.639–640, where a grater (κνῆστις, see 696) is used to grate cheese. Although Nic. found a different use for the Homeric word, the original relation to cheese is kept through the simile started with οἷα in 696. The metonymic use of στροφάλιγξ as *concretum pro abstracto* is not found elsewhere, as the noun usually designates a circular movement instead of a round object; cf. *Il.* 16.775 (of whirling dust), A.R. 3.759 (of eddying water), A.R. 4.140 (of whirling smoke), Arat. 43 (of the movement of celestial bodies).

698 **ἐπικνήθων:** only here, as a unique variant of ἐπικνάων, ‘grating into’. The formation follows similar pairs like νέμω/νεμέθω, of which the latter is an epicism; cf. 430 n. In 911 the rare ἐνικνήθεο is used.

**προφερέστατον ἄλκαρ:** echoing προφερέστατον ἄλλων, at line-end in both 396 and 498; see 498 n. According to Jacques (2002, 191–192) the reading προφερέστατον ἄλλων is to be preferred, as ἄλκαρ hardly ever comes without a grammatical complement in the gen. or dat. Plausible as this may seem, this would not be the first time the poet disobeys the standard rules of grammar; cf. Introduction 6.9. Moreover, it would result in an identical line-end for three different lines, which would contradict the poet’s keen pursuit of variation. In defence of Jacques’ reading, however, it can be argued that the double repetition of the expression confirms the idea of προφερέστατον ἄλλων being a pseudo-formulaic ending, similating the Homeric usage as a generic marker of epic. The pursuit of both variation and imitation of Homer, sometimes within a single phrase, shows Nic.’s ambivalent poetic stance, navigating between tradition and innovation.

699 **ἀπὸ κῆρας ἐρύξει:** despite its epic appearance (*tmesis*, Homeric vocabulary) the phrase does not occur in Homer or early epic, although Theogn. 13

(ἀπὸ κῆρας ἄλαλκε) and 767 (ἀπὸ κῆρας ἀμῦναι) are close. It is used, however, by two third-century Hellenistic poets (Isyllus 74, *CA* p. 132, ἀπὸ κῆρας ἐρύξας; Maistas 45, *CA* p. 70, ἀπὸ κῆρας ἐρῦξαι) and may well have been used by others. Nic. uses it here and in 862.

### *700–714 Blood of the Sea-Turtle, Wild Cummin, Curd of the Hare*

The second half of the first part of the *Theriaca* (for the poem's structure see Introduction 5.4) is concluded by a last recipe, consisting once more of both herbal (wild cummin, 710–711) and animal parts. The largest part of the recipe is taken up by a description of the blood of a sea-turtle, which needs to be prepared in a particular way. The passage, like the rest of the poem, is littered with rare words, probably borrowed from earlier poets, but it is otherwise not rich from a literary perspective. A possible reference to Apollonius in 703 may be pointing at a poignant reversal, revealing the bitter reality of Nic.'s world, as opposed to the epic-mythic world of the Argonauts.

**700 Πευθέο:** πεύθομαι, being older and rarer, is preferred to the more common πυνθάνομαι. Starting a new section with a verb marking instruction or transmission of knowledge is by no means limited to this instance, cf. τεκμαίρευ (396), φράζεο (157, 438, 656, 759), δήεις (384), ἄγρει (594, 630), οἶδα (805, 811); see Introduction 5.10 and 6.10.

**701 δάχματος:** see 119 n. The relation between the bite and the long creatures causing it (δολιχῶν) is underlined by the double alliteration of the δ and the χ.

**εἶαρ:** the choice between εἶαρ (proposed by J. Schneider, followed by Jacques) and εἶλαρ (mss, followed by Gow & Scholfield and Spatafora) is not easy. If the latter is correct Nic. is following a Homeric rarity here. In the *Iliad* the noun is used four times for 'shelter' of ships and men. But it is the different use of εἶλαρ in *Od.* 5.257 Nic. may have in mind here. Whereas Homer has κύματος εἶλαρ ἔμεν (in the same *sedes*), 'a defence against the waves', Nic. changes κύματος into the resembling δάχματος, retaining εἶλαρ ἔμεν and applying the particular meaning of 'defence' in *Od.* 5.257 to a new context, of defence against a different category of natural threats. Interestingly, the imitation with variation of the Homeric passage on defence *against* the sea, is used by Nic. in a passage describing the sea-turtle as a defence taken *from* the sea. A reference to the Homeric passage seems to be the more likely because of the combination with ἔμεν, which is typical of Homer, but otherwise rare; see Introduction 7.3.

If on the other hand we follow Jacques (following a proposal by J. Schneider) the correct reading is εἶαρ, a rare synonym for αἷμα; on εἶαρ see Magnelli 2002, 23 with n. 63. The primary argument for this rare interpretation is found in *SH* 18.19, λίθος εἰαριήτης, explained by the scholiast (*SH*, p. 8) as αἱματίτης λίθος. τὸ γὰρ ἔαρ Καλλίμαχος αἷμα λέγει (54c.22 Harder = *SH* 259 = 177 Pf.), Νίκανδρος δὲ εἴαρ. In Call. fr. 523 Pf. we find εἶαρ again, explained as αἷμα by *EM* p. 294.48. This reading makes good sense, with αἷμα in 706 looking back to εἶαρ here. Moreover, it eliminates the awkward doubling of εἶλαρ with ἀρωγήν in the previous line. Whichever reading is correct, either variant, clearly part of the poetic diction, underlines the poet's highly literary approach to his poetry.

**ἀνιγρούς:** the rare adj. is used in 8 as a synonym of ἀνιαρός, qualifying reptiles as 'grievous'. Here, however, the perspective is turned around as the adj. shows men as the receivers of grief, instead of snakes as the agents of grief; see 8 n.

**702 τὸ δέ τοι μέγ' ἀλέξιον εἴη:** a variation of τὸ δέ τοι προφερέστατον ἄλκαρ, at line-end in 698. The noun ἀλέξιον, short for ἀλεξηθήριον, is only found here, in 805, and in *Al.* 4.

**703 βροτολοιγόν:** the adj. is all but restricted to Ares, for whom it is a fixed epithet from Homer on. Exceptions are few: Meleager has βροτολοιγὸς Ἔρως in *AP* 5.180.1 (*HE* 4038), and *Epigr. Gr.* 1034.29 from Gallipoli gives Apollo the epithet, although the reconstruction is somewhat insecure: [β]ρο[το]λοι[γό]ν. Even if the adj. is used separately from Ares it is applied to gods only. Nic.'s unconvential application of the adj. to a turtle here suits his habit of borrowing epic words from their original contexts, and using them (perhaps comically) in new contexts that are far from the epic world of gods and heroes. Why exactly the sea-turtle, being a welcome aid in countering snakebites, is called a 'bane of man' by the poet is not explained further, but once again we see the poet introducing comical conflations of heroes and animals; see Introduction 8.4.

**ὑπὲκ πόντοιο:** the compound preposition is relatively rare and primarily a feature of poetry (Hdt. 3.116.4 is an exception). Eight instances are found in Homer, but never is the preposition used of the sea. Apollonius, who is the most avid user of ὑπέκ/ὑπέξ (10×), may be more relevant here, and may have given Nic. the idea to insert the preposition, using it in the combination ὑπὲξ ἁλός (2.668, 4.933). Particularly 4.933 may be siginificant, ὡς δ' ὁπόταν δελφῖνες ὑπὲξ ἁλὸς εὐδιόωντες κτλ., as this and the following lines describe dolphins jumping up gaily from out of the sea, circling around ships to accompany them, thus bringing joy to sailors. If this is the pretext Nic. is thinking of, the intertextual contrast

with the sea-turtle that is pulled up brutally from out of the sea into the fishermen's boat, only to be killed on the beach, is striking. Not only does the reference have several points of comparison (Argonauts ~ fisherman, dolphins ~ sea-turtle, animals coming out of the sea in both cases, ὡς δ' ὁπόταν ~ ἤτοι ὅταν at line-opening), but it also shows two striking characteristics of Nic.'s poetic customs: (i) turning heroical-mythical (dolphins as followers of Nereids in the Argonautica) elements of epic into common, everyday scenes, devoid of any sense of the heroic; (ii) turning beauty and gaiety into grim horror: the cheerful dolphin becomes a baneful, murdurous turtle, the joy of the Argonauts becomes the brutal killing of the fishermen.

**χελύνην:** the use of χελύνη, 'lip' (cf. Ar. *V.* 1083, a variant of χεῖλος) for a turtle is rare, although the similarity to both χέλυς and χελώνη is apparent. As χέλυς is already used in 700, the use of a lexical variant here is not surprising, considering Nic.'s keenness on *variatio*. Although χελώνη would have been a metrically valid alternative, Nic. chooses for the rare χελύνη, of which the Doric variant χελύνα is attested in Call. fr. 196.22 Pf. from the sixth iambus.

**704 ἐπὶ ξερόν:** a rare noun of which *Od.* 5.402, κῦμα ποτὶ ξερὸν ἠπείροιο, is the only early instance; the variants ἡ ξηρά sc. γῆ (X. *Oec.* 19.6–7) and τὸ ξηρόν (e.g. Hdt. 2.68, Th. 1.109, 8.105, X. *Cyr.* 7.5.18) are used more frequently. The Homeric rarity may be due to metathesis owing to the similar σχερός; Heubeck 1988, 285. The Homeric *hapax legomenon* is imitated by A.R. 3.322, ποτὶ ξερὸν ἔκβαλε κῦμα; see Campbell 1994, 293. Here Nic. deviates from the combination ποτὶ ξερόν, but retains the metrical *sedes* of the combination of preposition and noun, and the meaning of dry land in direct opposition to the sea. In this respect the particular use of ξερόν in Homer and Apollonius is followed closely, as Nic. underlines the particular site of transition from sea to land by αἰγιαλῶν. Heubeck signals the homericising tendency of Apollonius and Nic. in their imitations of the *hapax legomenon*, but erroneously states that both poets use ποτί, which is of course only true for Apollonius.

**ἀσπαλιῆες:** 'anglers'. This is the first of three appearances of fishermen in the *Theriaca*; cf. 793 (ἰχθυβολῆες) and 823 (ἁλιῆας). As expected Nic. uses three different words, avoiding repetition. For the portrayal of fishermen as a vista to everyday life see Introduction 8.2.

**705 ἀνακυπώσας:** 'having turned over'. The rare verb seems to be borrowed from Antimachus (fr. 150 Matthews = 115 Wyss), who is the first to use it. Lycophron's κἀνακυπώσας (137) is probably derived from the same source; it

is not a coincidence that both Nic. and Lycophron—known for their recondite idiom—make use of Antimachus' writings, considering his status as an aficionado of difficult language; see Matthews 1996, 351.

**706 μαύλιδι:** according to Hopkinson (1988, 105), commenting on Call. fr. 75.9 Harder, "a recherché synonym for μάχαιραν". As such, the word may well have appealed to Nic. The only other instance of the noun seems to be from Besantinus' equally contrived technopaegnion (μαύλιες in the *Altar*, *AP* 15.25.4); see Kwapisz 2013, 183.

**βλοσυρόν:** see 336 n. Here the adj. seems to express no less the feeling of disgust brought about by the procedure, than the appearance or texture of the blood itself.

**707 καμινόθεν:** perhaps the addition serves to stress that the vessel in which the turtle's blood is to be poured needs to be baked in a furnace, i.e. rather than simply dried in the sun. But the strong alliteration of νεοκμῆτι and καμινόθεν, which share all their consonents, and, to a lesser extent, κεράμῳ, suggest that the addition has not solely been inserted for its contents. Moreover, the only other instance of καμινόθεν is found, in the same *sedes*, in Call. *Dian.* 60, where it marks the furnace used by the Cyclopes who are forging a horse-trough for Poseidon on the Aetna. If Nic. has Callimachus in mind here, which seems plausible, this is another instance of Nic. taking a rare word from an elevated epic-mythic context, and reusing it in a setting lacking such grandeur; the result is a typical contrast between original, poetic diction and common, ordinary descriptions of everyday life; see Introduction 8.2.

**708 οὐρόν:** the watery part of blood (Pl. *Ti.* 83d). A coinage, turning the regular ὀρός ('whey', cf. *Od.* 9.222, 17.225) into the hyper-epic οὐρός/οὐρόν, a convenient alternative to suit the line-opening. The medical analogy between the watery part ('whey') and the residue ('curd') of milk to body fluids goes at least back to Plato (*Ti.* 83), but may well have been older.

**εὐεργέϊ μάκτρῃ:** yet another type of mortar is introduced; cf. θυείῃ (91), κάρδοπος (527), λίγδος (589), ὅλμος (506, 644, 951), ῥωγὰς πέτρῃ (644), and στύπος ὅλμου (951). Previous instances of μάκτρα seem to indicate that it was part of everyday speech, rather than a poetic word; X. *Oec.* 9.7, Ar. *Ra.* 1159 ('kneading-trough'), *Pl.* 545, Hermipp. 56 K-A. If we are to go by Hesychius (μ 136 μακτήρ· ἡ κάρδοπος, λ 970 λίγδος· ἡ θυ[ε]ία), there is little difference between the different types of

vessels, but as Gow (1951, 104) suggests this must be some kind of colander, as it is used here for separating serum from clotting blood.

The adj. (if this is the correct reading) is a nod to Homer, εὐργής being primarily part of early epic diction. Homer uses it as a stock epithet for crafted objects, such as ships (*Il.* 24.396, *Od.* 9.279, 11.70, 23.234 etc.), chairs (*Il.* 5.585, 13.399, 16.743), and once of a robe (*Od.* 13.224). Nic. uses the adj. here of a mortar, but in 109 it is said of a λάκτις, 'pestle'. Jacques and Spatafora prefer the alternative reading λαεργέϊ, 'made of stone', which makes good sense as a Nicandrean hapax, though perhaps less if the object referred to is a colander, which would probably be made of wood or clay, rather than stone; one loses, moreover, the apt Homeric adj. as given by Gow & Scholfield.

**709** **διατρυφές:** 'pulverized', ostensibly another coinage, only found here.

**710** **δραχμάων:** see 102 n.

**πισύρων:** see 182 n.

**711** **δοιάς:** see 291 n.

**ταμίσοιο λαγωοῦ:** for the use of curd from a hare as an ingredient see 578 and 949–950.

**712** **τετράμορον … καταβάλλεω βρῖθος:** similar to 102, δραχμάων τρίφατον δεκάδος καταβάλλεω βρῖθος. But as always Nic. makes sure not to repeat himself by more than a few words, avoiding any resemblance larger than a turn of phrase or a line-end.

**713** **ἔνθεν … πιέειν:** the rare combination of ἔνθεν with an *infinitivus pro imperativo*, also used in 525–526, is possibly borrowed from Nic.'s predecessor Numenius, who uses the same combination (*SH* 584.6); see Klauser 1898, 5.

**ἀποτμήγων:** see 853 n.

**714** **Καὶ τάδε μέν … δήεις:** with this short remark the first part of the *Theriaca* is rounded off. After the extensive account on snakes (157–492), followed by the second half on recipes to treat snakebites (493–714), we have now come to the second part of the poem, in which Nic. will treat other sorts of dangerous animals, again followed by a second half in which an account is given on proper treatments of afflictions. The briefness of Nic.'s remark is not surprising,

considering his terseness in matters of structure elsewhere, although it is easy to overlook the fact that τάδε sums up over 200 lines in a single word. This casualness is in fact highly reminiscent of—and perhaps inspired by—Hes. *Op*. 826, where τάδε πάντα serves the same purpose, summing up either the whole section of the 'Days' (764–868), or perhaps even the whole poem.

## 715–836 Part 2*a*: Other Kinds of Poisonous Animals

After a lengthy treatment of single and compound recipes for cures against snakebites, the first part of the poem ends with 714. The second and last part of the *Theriaca* deals with other kinds of poisonous animals. Like the first part, it consists of two halves: the first half treats the poisonous animals and their bites themselves, the second half deals with recipes to counter poisoning. The length of the second part of the *Theriaca*, being much shorter than the first, seems to be intentional as it reflects similar differences in length in the poems of Nic.'s predecessors and models here, i.e. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, and Aratus' *Phaenomena*. The second part of the poem shows less coherence than the first, as it comprises various animals, rather than a specific category like the first part (i.e. snakes). When compared to Aratus, such a lack of coherence is not problematic at all, considering the fact that the second part of the *Phaenomena*, known as the *Diosemeia*, similarly consist of various weather signs, lacking the overall structural and methodical consistency of the first part. The same point can of course be made for Hesiod, although it is quite clear that in the case of the *Works and Days* the combined title functioned as a somewhat loose marker, encompassing most of the contents of the poem, rather than delineating two strictly divided parts; see Introduction 5.4.

The different subjects treated in the second part may seem varied as they lack the unity of the first part on snakes. Their introduction, however, does not come as a surprise, as all groups have been foreshadowed in the proem: spiders (8), scorpions (14) and various other grievous reptiles (9), which more or less captures the range presented in the second part.

### 715–768 SPIDERS

715–724 The 'grape-spider'
725–728 The 'starlet'
729–733 The blue spider
734–737 The 'hunter'
738–746 The 'wasplet'

747–751 The ‘antlet’
752–758 Beetle-like spiders
759–768 The *cranocolaptes*

769–804 SCORPIONS

769–771 The white scorpion
772–774 The scorpion with red jaws
775–776 The black scorpion
777–781 The green scorpion
782–785 The livid scorpion
786–796 Two crablike species
797–798 The honey-coloured scorpion
799–804 The fiery-red scorpion

805–836 VARIOUS DANGEROUS CREATURES

805–810 Two kinds of bees
811–821 Myriopod, two kinds of wasp, centipede, shrew, *seps*, salamander
822–836 Murry, sting-ray, sea-snake

Although the structural division between the first and second part is evident with regard to contents, the break is not underlined by a second proem. The words directed at the addressee at the opening of the second part in 715 are hardly different from the countless other admonitions given by the poet throughout the account, and the only word that clearly signals the transition to the second part is φάλαγγος, ‘spider’, which contrasts with ὀφίεσσιν in the previous line. The lack of attention to details concerning the poem’s bipartite structure is, however, only apparent, as the poet incorporates two ‘hidden’ markers at the opening of the second part; see Introduction 5.4.

### *715–768 Spiders*

#### 715–724 The ‘Grape-Spider’

After the first part of the *Theriaca* has been concluded the poet proceeds with various sorts of spiders, the first of which is the ‘grape-spider’, so called because of its physical resemblance to a ῥάξ or ῥώξ, ‘grape’. By now, the addressee has become fully accustomed to the poet’s procedures, and without further introduction Nic. continues in his usual vein, describing the animal’s appearance, further details like its manner of moving and its teeth, the appearance of the wound, and the symptoms that attend its bite. Although the description of

the symptoms given here is quite extensive, the end is abrupt, as in 725 the poet proceeds with the next type of spider, leaving his audience in the dark about the outcome of the affliction: will the victim die without treatment or not?

Apart from the incorporation of the key words ἔργα and σήματα in the opening of the passage, the passage yields several interesting observations, such as the functional reuse of Homerisms (ῥέθεϊ in 721, προϊάπτεται in 723), lexical imitation of Hesiod (μέζεα in 722), but also references to earlier passages in the poem. The account of the symptoms caused by the spider's bite is gruesomely detailed, yet Nic.'s view shows a remarkable detachment, underlined by the abrupt end; not a word is reserved for sympathy to the unfortunate victim.

715 **Ἔργα:** as the first word of the second part of the poem, the choice for ἔργα is probably not random, particularly with Hesiod in mind. Although the word does not play a large part in the *Theriaca*—unlike in the *Works and Days*, which is littered with words of the -εργ-root, e.g. 43–46, 302–316, 409–413, 438–444; 65 instances altogether—its negative meaning here constitutes a sharp contrast with its positive connotations in the *Works and Days*. With latter poem in mind we could expect 'work' to be a positive element, as hard labour offers man a way out of all kinds of trouble, but Nic. uses it here to indicate the evil deeds of the spider (cf. Nic.'s designation of spiders in 8, κακοεργὰ φαλάγγια).

**σίνταο:** see 623 n. Nic. uses the noun as another way to indicate wily, grievous creatures; cf. 8, where the evil nature of spiders was already stated.

**περιφράζοιο:** see 541 n.

716 **σήματα:** if ἔργα (715) can be considered a buzz word in the *Works and Days* (see 715 n.), the same is certainly true of σήματα when speaking of the *Phaenomena*, as σῆμα, σήματα and cognate forms occur dozens of times in the poem (cf. 10, 168, 412, 433, 459–465, 565, 760, 772, 777, 805, 820, 837, 890, 906, 1037, 1040). And just like the negative inversion of ἔργα in the previous line is thematically relevant, σήματα here inverts the positive message of Aratus: whereas heeding the signs given by Zeus in the *Phaenomena* is advantageous to the attentive reader (or at least Aratus gives the impression it is), the σήματα described by Nic. here are merely consequences of the spiders' bites, and can only be treated afterwards. Neither Hesiod's positive influence of work, nor Aratus' cautious heeding of the stars and signs are part of Nic.'s gloomy world. Only careful attention to the poet's lessons is to any avail.

**βρυχμοῖσιν:** see 483 n.

**ἐπεί ῥ' … ῥώξ:** the start of a new topic (in this case the introduction of the first particular species of spider to be treated) in the middle of a line, after the trochaic caesura, is unusual in the *Theriaca*; for these lines' confusing syntax see Magnelli 2002, 80 n. 86. It can be suggested that this peculiar element is composed deliberately to give the beginning of the second part a ready start, adding speed at the outset of the account on spiders, as the information given is not expected until the beginning of the next line. The addressee, taken by surprise at this unexpected turn, is given a clear sign to pay attention to the new topic of the second part of the poem.

**αἰθαλόεις:** see 566 n.

**ῥώξ:** a variant of ῥάξ, 'grape'. Whereas Nic. to a large extent seems to use proper biological terminology when indicating snakes, his designation of spiders and scorpions seems less exact, consisting primarily of pointing out the animal's colour or shape, or likening the animal to a certain form. Whether the name ῥώξ is an invention of the poet, or standard nomenclature is hard to say. The only parallel is given by Aelian (*NA* 3.36), who, however, may well be borrowing from Nic.'s description here.

717 **ἐπασσυτέροις ποσίν:** just as in 246 the context in which Nic. sets the Homeric adj. is new; cf. Introduction 7.3. Perhaps *Il.* 4.427 is relevant here, ὣς τότ' ἐπασσύτεραι Δαναῶν κίνυντο φάλαγγες, which is part of a simile in which the Greek soldiers are compared to waves. Nic., may be thinking of spiders (φαλάγγια) in comparison to ranks of soldiers (φάλαγγες), both moving in succession (ἐπασσύτερος). If the poet has such a comparison in mind here, we have another clear instance in the *Theriaca* where Homeric war imagery is called to mind, and where textual echoes are used to invoke a parallel between the dangerous creatures discussed by Nic. and the fierce warriors from early epic. Such a portrayal of dangerous animals as 'the enemy', or the evocation of a warlike setting is typical of the *Theriaca*; see Introduction 8.8.

718 **γαστέρι δ' ἐν μέσατῃ … ὀδοῦσι:** "A spider's 'teeth' are in the front mid-line of the *prosoma*, which Nic. or his authority perhaps took for its stomach", Gow & Scholfield 1953, 184; for a more thorough overview of the biological details of the spider see Jacques 2002, 200. This detail as given by Nic. is confirmed by Ael. *NA* 3.36, στόμα δὲ εἴληχεν ἐν μέσῃ τῇ γαστρί. This, however, strengthens the idea that Aelian got his information from Nic, and unthinkingly—or at least without

further investigation—copied Nic.'s inaccurate description of the location of the spider's teeth.

**ὀλοοῖς … ὀδοῦσι:** an echo of 194, ὀλοοῖς δὲ συνερραθάγησεν ὀδοῦσι, which is said of the ichneumon breaking the eggs of the viper. The second instance of the combination here is used for a spider, whereas the combination is, surprisingly, never used for snakes' fangs. The only previous instance of the combination is A.R. 3.1028, where Apollonius describes the magic dragon teeth of Cadmus, but even there the teeth are not said to be ὀλοοί because of the venom they are thought to contain, but because of their magical powers.

**ἔσκληκεν:** Gow & Scholfield (1953, 184) correctly point out that the verb means 'hard' here, rather than 'dry'; cf. Gow 1951, 108. This usage of σκέλλω may in fact be somewhat more common than suggested, for which Asclepiades' well-known lines ναὶ ναὶ βάλλετ', Ἔρωτες· ἐνεσκληκὼς γὰρ ἀνίαις | ὀξύτερον τούτων, εἴ γέ τι, βούλομ' ἔχειν (*AP* 12.166.5–6 = *HE* 892–893), seem to be a parallel, though used metaphorically. The verb, a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 23.191), is rare, but neither the Homeric line, nor the few other Hellenistic instances (A.R. 2.53, 201, 3.1251) seem to be relevant here. Nic. is an avid user of this rarity, found in 694, 766, 785 and 789 as well.

**719 ἀνουτήτῳ ἴκελος:** 'appearing (like one) unwounded'. The adj. ἀνούτατος is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* (*Il.* 4.540) and was picked up by Apollonius in 2.75. Only in late epic does the adj. get a new life, as it comes to mean 'invulnerable' in Nonnus (e.g. *D.* 16.157, 382). In Nic. the lack of harm expressed through the adj.'s privative alpha is consequently enervated: although the skin looks unscathed, the affliction turns out to be devastating nonetheless, and the subsequent description of the symptoms that attend the spider's bite are once again gruesome in detail.

**χρώς:** a violation of the Callimachean metrical principle that a monosyllabic word at line-end must be accompanied by a bucolic diaeresis; Maas § 96 and Introduction 6.11. With 716, these are the only two instances of this breach in the poem.

**720 τὰ δ' ὕπερθε φάη ὑποφοινίσσονται:** a comparison with 178, τὸ δ' ἔνερθεν ὑπαιφοινίσσεται ὄθμα, shows Nic.'s keen avoidance of repetition. Both phrases start after the trithemimeres and are more or less similar in contents. Close imitation is, however, avoided by using the synonyms ὄθμα/φάος, the preverb ὑπο-/ὑπαι-, and the change in word order.

φάη: see 292 n. The description given in 720–724 shows an interesting progression. The poet starts with the top of the body of the victim, and slowly works his way down, describing the condition of limbs (ῥέθεϊ), groin (μέζεα), penis (καυλός), hips (ἰσχία), and finally knees (γούνων). For a similar, though inverse, pattern of description see 167 n. This progression is reminiscent of Homeric heroic arming scenes, e.g. *Il.* 16.130–154, 19.364–424. In *Il.* 11.16–46 we find a description of Agamemnon putting on his armour. First come the greaves (κνημῖδας, 17), then the corselet (θώρηκα, 19); on his shoulders he flings the sword (ξίφος, 29), and after taking up his shield (ἀσπίδα, 32) he puts on his helmet (κυνέην, 41) with the tall crest (λόφος, 42). The scene ends with two long spears (δοῦρε δύω, 43), rounding off a description from bottom to top not unlike Nic.'s. For depictions in the *Theriaca* reminiscent of the Iliadic world of battle see Introduction 8.8.

721 **ἐν ῥέθεϊ:** according to the scholiast (Σ *Il.* 22.68) and Eustathius (3.942.10) the Homeric ῥέθος is Aeolic for 'face', which is how it is used in lyric (Sapph. fr. 22.3 Voigt, although the meaning is not clear from the context), tragedy (S. *Ant.* 529, E. *HF* 1204), and occasionally in Hellenistic poetry (Call. fr. 67.13 Harder, Theoc. 29.16, A.R. 2.68, Lyc. 173). For some reason Homer took the plur. to mean 'limbs' in *Il.* 22.68, and probably in 16.856 as well; see Janko 1992, 420. This use, particular to the plur., is followed in [Theoc.] 23.39, where the plur. is understood as 'limbs' or 'body', but it does not seem to be used anywhere else. In this line Nic. shows himself even bolder by using the sg. (if this is the correct reading, Σ *Ther.* 721a give ῥέθεσι) to mean 'body'; to take ῥέθος as 'face' here, caught by a shiver (φρίκη) makes little sense. Σ *Ther.* 721a give μέλεσι as explanation of ῥέθεσι. Whether or not Nic. is being original here, or engaging, through his poetry, in Alexandrian learned discussions about the correct interpretation of Homer is hard to say. Tzetzes' comment on Lyc. 173 shows that at least in later times the sg. ῥέθος came to be used for body, and that to him the meaning of 'face' was a rarity, ῥέθεϊ νῦν μὲν τῷ ὅλῳ σώματι κυρίως δὲ μόνῳ τῷ προσώπῳ (Σ Lyc. 173 Scheer). But it is hard to decide whether Tzetzes had other reasons for this remark than his own experiences which, being very late, may not be relevant.

**σκηρίπτεται:** the verb is a Homeric rarity (*Od.* 11.595, 17.196), only picked up by Apollonius (2.667) and Nic. apart from a few scattered appearances in later prose. In *Od.* 17.196 the verb means 'to lean on a staff', but 11.595 (of Sisyphus taking a firm position by clutching the boulder tightly with his hand) and A.R. 2.667 (of oxen planting their hoofs firmly in the ground) express the idea of 'pressing vigoursly' that is also found here. Considering the fact that

Nic. uses the rare verb of a shudder (φρίκη), pressing heavily on the victim's body, his depiction could be considered a personification. The shivering braces itself and grips the victim tightly, not to be shaken off easily; see Introduction 8.1.

**αὐτίκα δὲ χρῶς:** the introduction of a new clause after the bucolic diaeresis is not frequent in the *Theriaca*. Here the new clause, brief though it may be, rouses the interest of the audience, anxious to hear exactly what horrifying proces will happen to the skin immediately (αὐτίκα) hereafter; cf. 637, 864.

722 **μέζεα:** a rarer variant of μήδεα (next to the unique, if correct, μέδεα in Archil. 222 *IEG*$^2$). Both μήδεα and μέζεα appear in archaic poetry (μήδεα is Homeric), but Nic. prefers μέζεα, because of its rarity, and of its appearance in Hes. *Op*. 512, which creates another lexical opportunity to show allegiance to his predecessor. That the Hesiodic line is on the poet's mind here is shown by Nic.'s use of φρίκη in 721, which is an imitation of *Op*. 512 too, θῆρες δὲ φρίσσουσ', οὐρὰς δ' ὑπὸ μέζε' ἔθεντο. For the authenticity of the attested variants μήδεα/μέζεα see West 1966, 85–86.

**καυλός:** 'penis'. The metaphorical use of what is normally a plant's stem is not a Nicandrean invention. Despite the fact that this is possibly the earliest attestation (the date of Hp. *Int*. 14, the only previous instance is not beyond dispute), later instances show that the term is in fact part of a larger system of metaphorical nomenclature, based on the similarity to plants and trees, to organise the *membrum virile*; cf. Ruf. *Onom*. 101–102, where καυλός is sided by similar medical designations as βάλανος and στῆμα; see also Adams 1982, 26–27. The line-end, after the bucolic diaeresis, creates the same kind of suspension through enjambment as the previous line; see 721 n.

723 **φύρματι:** a Nicandrean coinage (cf. *Al*. 485) of evident morphology (φύρω). As a result of the spider's poison, violent contractions cause the male victim's member either to urinate or to ejaculate. If urine is intended it is, however, dripping (μυδαλέος) with a kind of pus, which is how φύρμα can be understood; Σ *Ther*. 721 assumes that semen is intended (ἀποσπερματίζειν, γονορρυεῖν). Gow & Scholfield's "dripping with foul ooze" underlines the idea of filth, but Nic. may be merely stating that the affected semen is mixed, i.e. does not have its normal appearance. Nic.'s statement is confirmed by Pliny (*Nat*. 29. 86), who says of the same spider's bite, *urina similis araneis textis*, which means either "forming in the urine as it were spider's web" or "the urine looks like spider's web" (Jones 1963, 238). It is, however, not improbable that Pliny took his infor-

mation straight from Nic. (or his source), and is merely giving his interpretation of Nic.'s Greek here.[15]

**μυδαλέος:** 'dripping', varying on Nic.'s own coinage μυδόεις (308, 362). Perhaps this line was inspired by Homer's αἵματι μυδαλέας (*Il.* 11.54, same *sedes* as φύρματι μυδαλέος), of Zeus sending down dewdrops dank with blood from heaven, foreshadowing death in battle. If that context is recalled intentionally here the reference bodes ill for the victim of the bite of the grape-spider.

**προϊάπτεται:** the pass. is only found here. The act. is a rare, though well-known Homerism. In all four instances in the *Iliad* (1.3, 5.190, 6.487, 11.55) the verb is used of souls being hurled forcefully into or towards the Hades (imitated in A. *Th.* 322). In Homer the preverb expresses an idea of forward motion; Nic. uses the verb to express the victim's ejaculation in a more direct physical manner. Although the similarity of context between Nic. and the Homeric image is limited, the reuse of the marked Homeric verb invokes images of gloom and approaching death, as the reader is given the impression that Hades must surely be near. As a verbal echo, the verb triggers the presence of the nether world, thus adding a strong feeling of horror to the victim's plight: Nic. may not inform us precisely about the outcome, but through the allusion little doubt remains about a certain death.

724 **μάλκη:** probably a Nicandrean coinage (μαλκίω, 'to become numb with cold'). Cf. 382, where the plur. is used *in concreto* for chilblains. Here the sg. μάλκη (cf. *Al.* 540) expresses numbness from the cold, though this cold of course emanates from within the body, as opposed to numbness caused by frosty weather as normally expressed with the verb μαλκιάω.

**κατήριπεν:** placed between daggers by Jacques (2002, 56), who suggests that καὶ ἤριπεν or ἤρειπε καί (preceded by the elision of the final vowel of ἐνισκήπτουσα) is the better reading. Gow & Scholfield, however, print κατήριπεν without hesitation and considering ample attestation of this aor. of κατερείπω (always in the same *sedes*, e.g. in A.R. 4.1686), there is little reason to follow Jacques here.

15 For Pliny's use of Nic. as a source of information see e.g. *Nat.* 22.67, 26.103, 30.85, 32.66. It can hardly be coincidence that Pliny treats spiders (which he calls *phalangia*) at least partly in the same order as Nic., with the 'starlet' (*asterion*) following the 'grape-spider' (*rhox*), and preceding the blue spider (*caeruleus*).

**ἔχματα:** as transmitted in the mss and followed by Jacques. Gow & Scholfield follow Schneider's suggestion ἔχμα τε, which is unnecessary. Jacques rightly states that the plur. fits better here: both knees are affected, paralleled by ἰσχία in the previous line. The idea of numbness causing the bonds of the knees to be afflicted is reminiscent of Homer's idea of knees collapsing by wounding in battle. In *Il.* 5.176, 11.579, 21.114, 425 the phrase γούνατα λύειν serves to express heavy wounding, or sometimes perhaps even killing. Despite phrasing dissimilar to Homer's, Nic.'s depiction of the struggle between poisonous creatures and men, again calls Iliadic battle scenes to mind. See Introduction 8.8.

725–728 The 'Starlet'

After the abrupt end of the description of the 'grape-spider', Nic. proceeds with the 'starlet'. The account closely follows that of the grape-spider, describing the spider's appearance, its bite, the ensuing shivering (φρίκη in 721 and 727), followed by a state of numbness, caused by cold (cf. μάλκη in 724) or torpor (κάρος in 728), and affliction of the knees (cf. 724). Just as in the earlier accounts of the individual snakes the poet refrains from adding the outcome of the affliction. The most striking element in this brief passage is the use of the unusual personal pronoun φιν (725), probably due to confusion over proper Homeric diction.

725 **Ἀστέριον:** the new section starts immediately with the name of the next spider to be treated, an order unprecedented in the poem; 190 starts with ἰχνεύμων, but 190–208 are not part of the formal account of poisonous animals. This unusual choice, repeated in 729 and 734, gives a sense of urgency to the poet's account, as preambulary particles and the like are dispensed with: the subject proper is brought to the pupil's attention straightaway, soon to be followed by the next. Just as with the 'grape-spider' Nic.'s designation of the spider's name is based on its physical appearance, apparently resembling a star. The name is not attested elsewhere in Greek, although Pliny mentions the *asterion* (*Nat.* 29.86), probably using Nic. as his source. The actual resemblance is, however, not evident from Nic.'s brief description, as only striped bands on the spider's back are mentioned, lacking clear form.

A second function of ἀστέριον at the opening of a new section can be proposed, irreverent of the spider. If we are to interpret ἀστέριον as 'star' here, the noun, particularly at line-opening, can be considered another marker pointing at Aratus. Just as Ἔργα in 715 marked the relevance of Hesiod's *Works and Days* to the *Theriaca*, Ἀστέριον signposts Nic.'s other main predecessor, playing on the contents of the *Phaenomena*.

φιν: a Laconian dat., if we are to believe *EM* 702.41 (next to Syracusean ψιν), but the dialectal pronoun was ostensibly considered a rare variant of σφιν within the language of epic; cf. Bornmann 1968, 62. The pronoun is rare and limited to hexameter poetry, and its existence is based on the formulaic line ὅς σφιν ἐὔφρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν (*Il.* 1.73 etc.; 14× in Homer), of which the first two words have been read in various ways, viz. ὅς σφιν, ὅς φιν and ὅ σφιν; for a similar case of junctural metanalysis cf. *SH* 1043 and Reece 2009, 35. Such resegmentation is partly due to scribal errors, but as Reece (2009) shows the phenomenon originates in oral performance, where acoustic uncertainties and homophony can lead to blurred word boundaries. The modern Homer texts of Monro-Allen and West both have ὅ σφιν here, but although later tradition rejects the presence of φιν in Homer, in the first century CE it was recognised at least by Apollonius Sophista (Apollon. 163.15), who states that φιν is not found in Homer, contrary to what Apion had stated previously (οὐχ εὑρίσκεται δὲ παρ' Ὁμήρῳ, ὡς Ἀπίων τέταχεν). The reading φιν may have been a Hellenistic variant in the Homeric text known to Nic. and it cannot be ruled out that Nic. is imitating a rare Homerism here, or is showing his view on the question of authenticity, making a statement through his poetry; cf. Giangrande 1970b, 273, and Hollis (2009, 220), who argues that φιν may well have been considered an authentic Homeric pronoun by Callimachus. Interestingly, another ms reading (R, see Jacques 2002, 57) for δέ φιν here is δ' ὄφιν, showing another case of junctural metanalysis; perhaps an inattentive scribe had not realised the second part of the poem had already begun ten lines earlier.

The only pre-Alexandrian instances of φιν are Epich. 85.154 *CGFP* (but after φιν[ the papyrus breaks off) and perhaps Emp. 22.11 DK. Among the Hellenistic poets, only Callimachus precedes Nic., using the pronoun four times, *Hec.* frr. 69.4 H. (*SH* 288 = 260 Pf.), 111 H. (287 Pf.), *Dian.* 125 and 213. None of these instances seems relevant intertextually, although Callimachus' use of the rare Homerism may have inspired Nic. in his choice, here and in *Al.* 124 and fr. 73.2 G-S.

πιφαύσκεο: see 411 n.

726 λεγνωταί: the adj. is picked up from Call. *Dian.* 12, which is its only other appearance. The late Christod. 309 is evidently an imitation of Callimachus; see Tissoni ad loc. In Callimachus' hymn the adj. qualifies Artemis' chiton, expressing that it has a coloured border or is otherwise richly embroidered at the edge. Nic. uses the adj. to qualify the ῥάβδοι ('stripes' or 'bands') on the spider's back. The plur. implies multiple bands, but perhaps we are to understande that multiple stripes make up a pattern resembling the embroidered border of

a decorated chiton. For other instances of *hyperbaton* between adj. and corresponding noun see 15 n. and Introduction 6.8.

**στίλβουσι:** the stripes or bands on the spider's back are said to 'gleam'. Although the verb is not particularly rare, Nic. may be thinking of clothes here, as the verb is sometimes used in this manner; in *Il.* 18.596 chitons are said to 'shine', which may be on Nic.'s mind through the association with Artemis' chiton in the same line. But the verb is sometimes used of signs that are said to stand out against the background, e.g. Eup. 394 K-A, of the red lambda sign on the Spartans' shields.

**ῥάβδοι:** occasionally used for prominent stripes on the skins of animals; cf. Arist. *HA* 525a12, Clearch. 73.

727 **βρύξαντος:** apparently an elliptic gen. abs., unless one forcedly takes τεῦ in 725 as the agreeing pronoun. Such gen. abs., of which the elliptic subject can easily be supplemented occasionally occur both in poetry and prose (Smyth § 2072), cf. 7 n. and Phanocl. *CA* 1.6, p. 107, with Hopkinson 1988, 179–180 and Magnelli 2002, 7 n. 10

**ἐπέδραμεν:** not a personification, as already in Homer ἐπιτρέχω is used for phenomena like ἀχλύς (*Od.* 20.357); cf. Arat. 834. Yet the idea of an infliction 'running' over the body (cf. 237) adds to a sense of highly unpleasant sensations, against which little can be done; cf. Spatafora 2005, 259.

728 **κάρος:** 'torpor' or 'dizziness', a word from outside poetic diction, possibly introduced into epic by Apollonius, who uses the noun in 2.203. The term is previously limited to (technical) prose (Arist. *Pr.* 873b14), as is the case in later instances (Phld. *D.* 1.18, Strb. 16.4.19, Gal. 2.831 Kühn etc.). Cuypers (1997, 203) rightly suggests that Nic.'s use of the noun here is an example of etymological play, juxtaposing κεφαλή and κάρος (suggesting κάρα, the epic equivalent of κεφαλή); see Introduction 6.6.

**δεσμά:** 'bond', 'ligature'. Another technical term from the language of biology, cf. Arist. *HA* 495b13. The line-end resembles that of 724, and γούνων δ' ὑποέκλασε δεσμά looks like a synonymical rephrasing of κατήριπεν ἔχμα τε γούνων in 724.

729–733 The Blue Spider

The next spider treated is the blue spider, whose traits are, as is to be expected, delivered in rare epic language. The monster's evil assault is depicted by use of a grim metaphor, of night settling in the head (732) as the poison affects the body.

729 **Κυάνεον δέ τοι ἄλλο:** for the distinct word order, placing the spider's name at the opening of the section cf. 725 n. The phrasing is a slight variant of 725, again repeated, with a few changes, in 734.

**πεδήορον:** 'aloft'. πεδάορος is Aeolic/Doric for μετήορος (Alc. fr. 315 Voigt, conjectured in A. *Ch.* 590; see Garvie 1986, 206). Nic.'s adj., which occurs only here, is thus a pseudo-epicism, giving the dialect word an epic touch by changing the original alpha into an Ionic-epic èta; see Introduction 6.3. The result seems to be a learned capping of *Il.* 23.369, ἀίξασκε μετήορα, where the otherwise unique combination of the adj. with ἀίσσω, albeit as a compound, is used. In Homer the combination is used for chariots jumping high in the air as they partake in the funeral games for Patroclus. As usual, Nic. slightly adapts the wording and applies his alteration to an entirely different context, although the Homeric image still functions in the background. Here the adj. refers to a particular trait of the blue spider, which is able to make large leaps, the scope of which is given epic proportions through the Homeric allusion; see Introduction 7.3.

730 **καὶ ἐπὶ χροΐ:** as opposed to the bite of the grape-spider, of which the poet stated in 719–720 that the skin looks unharmed after the spider's bite.

731 **γυιώσῃ:** 'lame', an unusual verb found in epic, *Il.* 6.265, 8.402, 416 and Hes. *Th.* 858 (γυιωθείς, of Zeus laming one of the Titans), although its occurrence in Hippocrates (*Art.* 52, *Acut.* 59) tells us the verb was probably not considered a proper epicism.

**οἱ ἐν:** 'inside him'. The rare postpositive use of ἐν, not found in prose, is a contrived poeticism; for other instances of such postpositive use of prepositions see Introduction 6.8.

732 **νύξ δὲ περὶ κροτάφοις:** an original metaphor, but of what? We would expect 'night' to appear metaphorically before the eyes (as in *Il.* 5.310 = 11.356 ~ 14.438, ἀμφὶ δὲ ὄσσε κελαινὴ νὺξ ἐκάλυψε), not around the temples, although by extension the expression of course refers to darkness all around the head. Alternatively, if νύξ expresses some kind of swooning here a relation to the

temples would only make sense if the temples were physically hit. The answer becomes less relevant when we see what is really on the poet's mind here: an echo of the first half of *Il.* 20.397, νύξε κατὰ κρόταφον. Nic. has changed the verb νύξε into a noun, and despite the lack of any lexical correspondance between νύξε and νύξ the paronomastic resemblance is close; the particle δέ is added to fill the metrical gap. Although the Homeric context is of course entirely different from Nic.'s, the echo recalls the Homeric context nonetheless, leaving the reader with the idea that the spider's bite has the effect of feeling one has been hit on the head, as if wounded in battle; cf. Introduction 8.8.

The only other instance where someone is said to have 'night' literally around his temples, albeit indirectly, is in [Hes.] *Sc.* 226–227, δεινὴ δὲ περὶ κροτάφοισι ἄνακτος | κεῖτ' Ἄιδος κυνέη νυκτὸς ζόφον αἰνὸν ἔχουσα. These lines are part of a description of Theseus' appearance on the shield of Heracles. Theseus is wearing Hades' helmet of invisibility, made of dog's leather (κυνέη), 'around his temples', the helmet containing the 'dread darkness of night'. Although this context too has little in common with Nic., the idea of Hades, and by extension, death itself being somehow around the temples may be relevant here. However, the author of the *Scutum* may simply have taken the expression as a synonym for helmet, as used in *Il.* 5.845. Of course the noun νύξ itself, normally used metaphorically in relation to the eyes, is highly apt for (temporary) blindness. Apart from the Homeric instances mentioned above Callimachus has ὄμματα νὺξ ἔλαβεν (*Lav.Pall.* 82) to express the same idea.

**ἔμετον δ' ἐξήρυγε δειρῆς:** both the symptom and its description bear close resemblance to 435, ἢ ἀπερευγόμενοι ἔμετον χολοειδέα δειρῆς. There does not seem to be any difference between the verbs ἀπερεύγομαι and ἐξερεύγομαι. The latter is probably chosen here to achieve maximum variation; see Introduction 6.10.

733 **λοιγόν:** for the adjectival use see 6 n.—unless Cazzaniga (1963b) is right in assuming that λοιγόν is used as an apposition here.

**ἀραχνήεντα:** probably a Nicandrean coinage, used only here and in *Al.* 492. The alternative adj. ἀραχναῖος is found in Arch. *AP* 6.39.3 (*GPh* 3622), Antip. Sid. *AP* 6.206.6 (*HE* 203) and Eryc. *AP* 9.233 (*GPh* 2251), which are all of later date. It can therefore not be stated with certainty that Nic. is using a poetic alternative to a regular existing adj. here, but the poet's preference for coining adj.'s in -εις is well attested; cf. 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**ὄλεθρον:** at line-end, in its classic *sedes*; see 675 n.

734–737 The 'Hunter'

After the blue spider, the fourth spider to be treated is the so-called 'hunter' (ἀγρώστης), a species that hunts bees, gadflies and the like, but is innocuous to man. Its appearance is likened to the wolf-spider, but since the latter is not treated separately no clues to its identification are effectively given. The passage contains two interesting references to earlier epic poetry: (i) the epic designation ὀλετήρ, a humorous projection of the heroic warrior onto a little animal, (ii) an intertextual reference to Odysseus, who is a model here for the spider lying in wait for possible victims.

**Ἀγρώστης:** 'hunter'. For the distinct word order, with the spider's name at the opening of the first line of the new section cf. 725 n. The pattern is in fact a repetition of 725 and 729, both in length (filling the first half of the hexameter, up to the trochaic caesura), and phrasing (name, particle, particle/pronoun, ἄλλο-). Unlike the 'grape-spider', the 'starlet', and the blue spider, Nic.'s designation does not apply to the spider's appereance, but to its nature, as is explained in 735–736. As a noun ἀγρώστης is not unknown, either as a synonym for ἀγρότης', 'rustic' (S. *Ichn.* fr. 94, E. *HF.* 377, *Rh.* 287, Call. *Hec.* fr. 69.13 H. = *SH* 288 = 260 Pf.), or as a hunter in particular (only in A.R. 4.175). Nic. seems to be the first to use it to designate a particular kind of spider, probably of his own accord.

**λύκου:** 'wolf-spider', cf. Philum. *Ven.* 15.2. Although the 'hunter' may have been given its name only by Nic., the 'wolf-spider' is treated by Aristotle (*HA* 623a2), and is therefore recognizable at least for an expert reader. The wolf-spider itself is, however, not treated in the *Theriaca*. Maybe this species is not considered relevant to the poem, because it is not venomous, but elsewhere Nic. mentions harmless creatures too in the course of his account (cf. 488–492).

735 **μυιάων ὀλετῆρος:** 'destroyer of flies'. Although the designation in itself may be apt to qualify the wolf-spider, the combination's paradoxical hyperbolic nature gives a comical impression, as ὀλετήρ is a *hapax legomenon* in *Il.* 18.114, describing Hector, the acme of heroism. Again Nic. imports the language of heroic epic to qualify natural phenomena; see Introduction 8.8. For the comical effect of such epic qualifications used in a more low-brow context cf. *Batr.* 117, where a mouse styles a mouse-trap as an ὀλέτειρα of mice; see Introduction 8.4. Although the exact date of the *Batrachomyomachia* is a matter of debate (late Hellenistic, but perhaps even from the Augustan era), the phrasing of *Batr.* 117, μυῶν ὀλέτειραν, being close to Nic.'s μυιάων ὀλετῆρος, leads us to suspect that Nic. knows the poem and is playing on the parody (in turn a parody of Homer) here. However, according to some (Van Groningen 1977, 24) *Batr.* 117,

found in the Byzantine recension, is a later addition and therefore cannot have influenced Nic. Apart from Homer, the noun ὀλετήρ (ὀλέτειρα) is found in Alcm. 93.8 *PMGF*, Euph. *CA* 3, p. 29 (5 Van Groningen) and possibly in *SH* 418.12 (19e Van Groningen), probably as a Homeric rarity, and much later in Piso *AP* 11.424.2.

**ὀπιπεύει δὲ μελίσσας:** perhaps a play on *Od.* 19.67, ὀπιπεύσεις δὲ γυναῖκας, in which the beggar (viz. Odysseus) is accused by the evil servant Melantho of ogling women. Both phrases are metrically equivalent and occupy the second half of the line, with μελίσσας echoing the end of γυναῖκας. If the Homeric line is on the poet's mind here, the spider is imagined to share the same quality as Aethon/Odysseus in Homer, viz. watching a particular group of creatures, presented in a negative manner; for this use of the verb cf. Hes. *Op.* 29. Nic.'s projection of the spider's habits on the Homeric example thus adds to the poet's negative portrayal of the creature: the spider is not merely depicted as following the needs nature implanted into him, but as having an evil mind. The play on Homer is the more salient because μελίσσα is sometimes used for chaste women (cf. Semon. 7.83–93 *IEG*², Phoc. 2.2 Gentili-Prato; humorously reworked by Marc. Arg. *AP* 5.32 = *GPh* 1307–1310). Indirectly, Nic. has capped Homer, while he is ostensibly only describing a natural phenomenon. For Nic.'s habit of projecting human qualities on animals see Introduction 8.1.

736 **ἐπὶ δεσμὸν ἵκηται:** varying on the Homeric ἐπὶ δεσμὸν ἰῆλαι in *Od.* 21.241 (~ *Od.* 8.443 ἴηλον ~ 8.447 ἴηλε) in the same *sedes*.

737 **μεταμώνιον:** see 152 n.

## 738–746 The 'Wasplet'

The fifth spider is the wasp-spider (σφήκειον). The phrasing (τό … ἔπουσι) suggests that Nic. is not introducing his own nomenclature, but follows customary designations. He does, however, as is his wont, point at the etymology of the spider's name, which is of course based on its physical resemblance to the wasp (σφήξ). Unexpectedly, the wasp is consequently likened to a horse with regard to its fierce nature. This comparison serves a double purpose: (i) a transition to the *bougonia* (741–742), a fantastic yet fascinating biological phenomenon the poet is eager to include; (ii) an explanation of the fierce nature of the wasp-spider: it resembles the wasp, which in turn resembles a particular kind of horse (λυκοσπάς, 742) known for its fierce nature.

738 **δύσδηρι:** only here. The only other known compounds of δῆρις are πολύδηρις (Parm. 7.5 DK) and ἄδηρις, which occurs in anon. *SH* 982.11 (see Barbantani

1998, 286) and Leon. *AP* 7.440.6–7 (= *HE* 2019–2020). These two latter lines, however, are only in Planudes, and have been condemned by many; see Gow & Page 1965b, 322. The cognate ἀμφιδήριτος and ἀδήριτος are found somewhat more frequently. It seems Nic. made up the compound himself as an alliterative poeticism. Even though the adj. does not point at a particular intertext, δῆρις, a noun with an Iliadic context, triggers an image of Homeric battle; see Introduction 8.8. The qualification 'hard to fight with' is hardly apt for a spider, and in fact nowhere in the poem is there any mention of an actual fight between beast and man.

739 **σφηκὶ προσαλίγκιον ὠμοβορῆϊ:** maybe Nic. is echoing the Homeric (and metrically similar) λείουσιν ἐοικοτές ὠμοφάγοισιν here, which occurs three times as a formulaic line-end in the *Iliad* (5.782, 7.256, 15.592). If Nic. has these words in mind he has cleverly created his own variation, exchanging ἐοικότες for the unique synonym προσαλίγκιον, ὠμοφάγοισιν for the very rare ὠμοβορῆϊ, and most importantly, lions for a small wasp: once again a small animal is blown up to be given the qualitities of wild and strong predators.

**ὠμοβορῆϊ:** ὠμοβορεύς is not found elsewhere; either an adj. (cf. ὠμοβόρος, of Maenads in A.R. 1.636), or a noun in apposition. The addition heralds the relation between the wasp and raw flesh, expounded in the next two lines, although in a different setting.

740 **ὅς δὴ θαρσαλέην … ἵππου:** a rather forced transition to the next line, but the particle helps to create the impression that the following digression makes sense, as it leads up to the moderately famous phenomenon of the *bougonia* in 741; for δή as referring to a well-known empirical fact cf. Sicking & Van Ophuijsen 1993, 143. The superfluous remark does not concern the wasp-spider, but the wasp itself. Neither the audacious nature (θαρσαλέην γενεήν) of the wasp, nor that of the horse is relevant here. This line is merely preparatory to the next: the poet does not let an opportunity pass by to include a marvelous zoological phenomenon.

741 **ἵπποι … μελισσῶν:** the description is an example of the so-called *bougonia*, the ancient theory that bees are born out of the carcasses of oxen; for the term, first found in Varro (*R.* 2.5.5), see Kitchell 1989. Here Nic. merely seems to point at the idiosyncratic conception of bees as a natural phenomenon, but the term more accurately applies to an apicultural technique practiced to provide a bee-keeper with a new hive. The technique is described elaborately in 15.2 of the *Geoponica*, the Byzantine collection of treatises on agriculture;

for the part on the *bougonia* see Gow 1944, 14–15. Its most famous description is given by Vergil (G. 4.281–314), but despite the fact that the *bougonia* makes for interesting poetic material, the phenomenon is fictitious and belongs to the realm of folklore and paradoxography; see Introduction 8.6. It is therefore not surprising that the *bougonia* is absent from Aristotle, although *Gen.An.* 3.10.760b suggests that he had heard about the phenomenon, but just did not want to include unobserved, and therefore unreliable, material.

Although the earliest reference is relatively late (βουγενέας, Philet. CA 22, p. 94 = 14 Spanoudakis), the origin of the fantastic phenomenon may be much older, and an Egyptian (cf. Verg. G. 4.287) or at least African origin is not unlikely; cf. Thomas 1988b, 196–201; Spanoudakis 2002, 182–184; Stephens 2003, 4. According to Eusebius (*Chron.* 1254) the epic poet Eumelus (eighth century BCE), wrote a *Bougonia* (PEG 4), but nothing is known about its contents. It may have dealt with the birth of bees, but the title could also refer to the birth of cattle. Another indirect reference (Colum. *Rust.* 9.14.6, *progenerari posse apes iuvenco perempto Democritus et Mago nec minus Vergilius prodiderunt*) tells us Democritus wrote about the subject. After the instance in Philitas mentioned above, the phenomenon is referred to in Theoc. (or [Theoc.]) *Syr.* 3 (cf. Gow 1952b, 555), Call. fr. 54.4 Harder (383.4 Pf. = SH 254), Bianor AP 9.548.2 (*GPh* 1740), and Mel. AP 9.363.13; references in Kitchell 1989.

Technically the *bougonia* is limited to the engendering of bees from oxen, to which Nic. is referring in the second half of the line. The contents of the first half, describing the creation of wasps from horses (*hippogonia*), is found earlier in two fragments of the Ἰδιοφυῆ of Archelaus of Chersonesus (third century BCE): SH 126, ἐκ νέκυος ταύτην ἵππου γράψασθε γενέθλην, | σφῆκας, quoted by the paradoxographer transmitted under the name of Antigonus of Carystus (*Mir.* 19.4b.1 Musso), and SH 128 (Var. R. 3.16.4), ἵππω⟨ν⟩ μὲν σφῆκες γενεά, μόσχων δὲ μέλισσαι. The fantastic phenomenon is often referred to in later literature; Ov. *Met.* 15.361–368, Ph. *De specialibus legibus* 1.292, Plu. *Cleom.* 60.5 (βόες instead of ταῦροι), S.E. P. 1.42, Ael. NA 1.28, Orig. *Cels.* 4.57.26, 59.18, [Gal.] *An animal sit quod est in utero* 19.175.7 Kühn etc. The two instances mentioned by Nic. are not unique in the paradoxographical tradition, and Antigonus gives a few similar instances: in SH 125 scorpions are said to grow from a dead crocodile, and SH 129 tells us about a snake born from the marrow of a dead man's putrefying spine (cf. Plu. *Cleom.* 60.5). Plutarch adds the example of asses producing beetles. The incorrectness of such statements is probably a mixture of folklore and misobservation. In the case of the *bougonia* bees were likely to have been confused with drone-flies, which are not engendered from carcasses, but are at least often seen close or even inside of them; Kitchell 1989, 197. Apart from the *Theriaca* Nic. refers to the fantastic phenomenon in *Al.* 446–452, and it is

not unlikely that the subject was treated in more detail in the *Melissurgica*, although the only extant fragments (92–94 Schneider, cf. Gow & Scholfield 1953, 215) give us no clues. A reference in Columella's *De agricultura* (9.2.4), which tells us that Nic. related how bees originated in Crete at the time of Saturn, surely refers to the *Melissurgica*. For the relation between the *Theriaca* and the paradoxographical tradition see Introduction 8.6.

742 **σκήνεσι πυθομένοισι:** this line was considered an interpolation by Bentley. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 184–185) have a hard time interpreting lines 741–742 ("as they stand they assert that bulls are born from bees") and place 742 between brackets. Jacques and Spatafora, however, rightly restore the line as good sense can be made of the Greek.

**λυκοσπάδες:** a puzzling word, for which several solutions have been given. Literally 'torn by wolves' (Σ *Ther*. 742), but such a literal interpretation need not be relevant here. As is clear from Call. fr. 488 Pf. Ἀτράκιον δήπειτα λυκοσπάδα πῶλον ἐλαύνει, and from later sources (Plu. *Quaest.Conv*. 641f, Ael. *NA* 16.24), the λυκοσπάς is a particular kind of horse, known for its fiery nature. Here it is used as an epithet of bees, whose fierce nature is compared to that of the horse, which is after all—by extension—its genitor. Gow & Scholfield tentatively suggest a relation to the wolf-spider (λύκος) in 734, but such a connection brings in new difficulties. The literal meaning of λυκοσπάς does not seem to play a role here, although Nic. is obviously aware of the fact that a possible connection between tearing wolves and dead horses fits the context of torn carcasses.

Alternatively it has been suggested that the literal meaning of λυκοσπάς *does* play a role; Jacques 2002, 58. A similar approach is taken by White (1987, 50–53), who takes λυκοσπάδες as an adjectival *enallage*; not the bees are torn by wolves, but the rotting carcasses. But if we are to imagine that only after the wolves have torn open the skin of the dead bull the new-born bees can escape the body, another problems occurs: it is highly improbable that wolves would approach carcasses that have been lying dead for days, instead of approaching them straightaway.[16] What is meant is of course that we are to picture horses and bulls that perish because they are torn by wolves, which causes their carcasses to rot. Eventually out of their corpses newly-born wasps and bees emerge. The

16 Although the length of time thought necessary for bees to be born from a carcass is not precisely clear, Vergil's account of Aristaeus in the *Georgics* (4.552) suggests nine days. For the prescription that the hide needs to remain intact during the process of engendering bees cf. Verg. *G*. 4.302.

adj. thus refers to the carcasses. Cazzaniga (1966a, 448–449), unhappy with the text as transmitted, proposed to read ἐξενέποντο instead of ἐξεγένοντο, which is sensible but unnecessary.

743 **οὐτήσαντος:** a verb only found in poetry, for which Homer (80× in the *Iliad*, 8× in the *Odyssey*), is the most important source. This gives Nic.'s portrayal of the spider's assault here an epic ring, as once again an animal is depicted as a Homeric warrior; see Introduction 8.8. Elsewhere in the *Theriaca* the poet usually sticks to the more neutral τύπτω (see 2 n.). The use of οὐτάω for an animal is precedented by Aratus, who uses οὖτα of a scorpion in 643, a verse clearly known to Nic. (see 14 n). Aratus, however, does not use the combination of the animal with the epic verb in a description of real life, but in a mythological narrative digression, which is by nature closer to epic poetry. By transporting the epic verb to a situation in the real world Aratus is capped, as Nic. transports the combination to a new context.

**θέει:** for the image of afflictions 'running' over the body see 727 n. on ἐπέδραμεν.

744 **ἐξέτεραι:** see 412 n.

**μετὰ γούνασι:** μετά with the dat. is limited to poetry. Here it is used as a contrived epicism, in the proper locative sense with the plur.; Smyth § 1691.2, K-G § 439.II. The hollow of the knees seems to be particular vulnerable when it comes to the bite of spiders (cf. 724, 728), a symptom not once mentioned in the part on snakes.

**παλμός:** apparently a term of medical origin; see Crugnola 1961, 136; De Stefani 2006a, 65; Spatafora 2007a, 170–171.

745 **ἀδρανίῃ:** see 248 n.

746 **ἐσχάτιον … παυστήριον:** a 'Golden Line', cf. 339 n. and Introduction 6.8. Although the description is brief and the victim's gruesome end comes soon, the account is rounded off in style. The aesthetically refined golden line contrasts sharply with the contents of inevitable death; cf. 339, where a golden line decorates a line with nasty contents as well. Apart from the golden line, κακοεργός … ὕπνος is introduced euphemistically, as is the unique παυστήριον, presenting death as a positive element, bringing ultimate (ἐσχάτιον) relief from pain.

### 747–751 The 'Antlet'

The sixth spider treated is the antlet (μυρμήκειον), distinguished by its similarity to the ant, just like the wasplet and the wasp. The method is by now familiar: after the animal's name, followed by a brief etymological remark, the poet subsequently describes the creature's appearance, its colours and shape, followed by a remark on the consequences of its bite. This final description of a particular species of spider lacks detail on the bite and its symptoms, nor does it stand out in poetical points of interest.

747 **εἰ δέ:** for this combination at line-opening as a typical element of Hesiod's didactic poetry see 57 n. and Introduction 5.10.

**ὃ δὴ μύρμηξιν ἔϊκται:** even in cases where the etymology of an animal's name is too obvious to mention (cf. 334, 359, 411) Nic. nevertheless dutifully points out the relation; see Introduction 6.6.

748 **ἄζῃ:** 'dryness', a rare noun and a Homeric *hapax legomenon* to boot. Nic. perhaps varies on *Od.* 22.184, where it means 'dirt'. Such a shift in meaning is not unusual considering Nic.'s keenness on Homeric rarities, and his frequent use of the ἀζα- root elsewhere (31, 37, 205, 221, 339, 357) meaning 'dry'.

750 **αἰθαλέῃ:** αἰθαλέος is only found in A.R. 4.777. Other variants used in the *Theriaca* are αἰθαλόεις (174, 420, 566, 716, 773), αἴθαλος (659) and αἰθός (288, 892): just like in most of the other Hellenistic poets, the versatility of the epic language is put to good use, both for metrical convenience, and for variety in poetic diction, thus adding to the literary character of the poem. For the *hyperbaton* of αἰθαλέῃ … κόρσῃ see 15 n.

**τυτθόν:** see 755 n.

**κόρσῃ:** properly 'temple' (*Il.* 4.502, 5.584, 13.576, Call. *Dian.* 78), but also used of the whole head, cf. Emp. 57.1 DK, [Theoc.] 25.256, Herod. 7.71, Lyc. 711; see 905 n. and Schade 1999, 123.

751 **ἄλγεα … ἶσα:** the poet underlines that the small size of the antlet must not give the wrong impression: it is dangerous nonetheless. Nic.'s remark here of course excludes the innocuous bite of the 'hunter' (737).

**κνώπεσσι:** for the use of κνώψ, short for κινώπετον (see 499 n.), for land serpents, as opposed to κνωδάλον (mainly used for sea serpents) see 27 n. Although

spiders are of course not serpents, the distinction between land and sea seems to apply here as well. Nic. may, however, consider the noun applicable to monsters in general, or more specific, poisonous animals.

### 752–758 Beetle-Like Spiders

After the treatment of singular species of spiders a last category remains, comprising small spiders that look like beetles. Unlike the previous spider-accounts the poet starts with a likely haunt for these beetle-like spiders, combined with a realistic setting: confrontation with spiders during work in the field. The description of men harvesting recalls earlier references to rustic settings or field labourers (5–6, 21–29, 113–114, 166, 377) and brings Nic.'s largely academic account back to the world outside. Such scattered glimpses of the cultured world (as apposed to the natural world) thus function as small vistas, reminding us of the proem, in which the relation between subject and purpose was much closer; see Introduction 8.2. The afflictions of this species' bite are horrible, but just as in 257, 467, 724 et al. nothing is said about the outcome. The victim is subject to some kind of frenzy or insanity, but we are neither told if this condition is permanent or only temporal, nor if the poisoning is ultimately lethal.

752 This line is said by Erotianus (*Vocum Hippocraticarum collectio* 136) to belong to Nic.'s *Georgica*, but unless the poet uses the same line twice in different poems, Erotianus is misinformed here.

**χειροδρόποι:** only here, perhaps a coinage. Its meaning is easily understandable, as the suffix -δρόπος is often found in a context of harvesting, e.g. βατοδρόπε (*h.Merc.* 190), 'pulling up brambles', μονόδροπον (Pi. *P.* 5.42), literally 'plucked from one stem', ἐαριδρόπων (v.l. in Pi. fr. 75.6), 'plucked in spring', or νεοδρόποις (A. *Supp.* 354) said of branches; cf. μαλοδροπῆες (Sapph. fr. 105a.2 Voigt), 'apple-pickers'. The proximity of χεδροπά ('legumes') in the next line suggests that Nic. is indulging in etymological play (see Introduction 6.6), reducing χεδροπά (also known als κέδροπα, Attic for ὄσπρια, 'pulse', 'legumes') via *χερδροπά to *χειροδροπά (Chantraine 1249); 'folk etymology with χείρ and δρέπω', Beekes 1617. The position of the adj. at the opening of both the line and the section is emphatic, as particularly those who harvest by hand (i.e. without tools) run the risk of getting bitten.

**φῶτες:** all but limited to poetry. Throughout the poem ἀνήρ is used, but occasionally φώς is employed, apparently to avoid hiatus (363, 403, 701, 767) as is the case here; ἄνθρωπος is never used by Nic. The *Alexipharmaca* shows the same preference for ἀνήρ, in addition to some instances of φώς.

**ἄτερ δρεπάνοιο:** the absence of a sickle does not point at the lack of a weapon of defense against approaching spiders, but underlines that the harvesters, using their bare hands, are particularly exposed to the danger of spiders and of contracting poisonous bites. The repetition of the δρεπ–/δροπ–root (cf. χειροδρόποι and χέδροπα in the next line) shows another of the poem's subtle instances of the *figura etymologica*; see Introduction 6.6.

753 **χέδροπα:** see 752 n. and Introduction 6.6.

**μεσοχλόου:** 'greenish', one of the many plant-related adj.'s coined for the occasion; see Introduction 6.2. Although the line adds little to the account of spiders themselves, the poet takes the opportunity to paint the scene described here, albeit briefly. Pulse, legumes and the like are pictured still green in the fields, and the audience is presented an image of harvesters. Nic. builds up the picture with care in two lines: first we are presented the labourers, then we look down to the plants in the soil (see Introduction 8.2), followed by the spiders surrounding the plants in the subsequent lines.

754 **ἐπασσύτερα:** 'one after another', but this time of the spiders themselves, not of the feet of a single spider; cf. 717.

755 **εἴκελα κανθαρίδεσσι φαλάγγια:** rather vague, considering the previous descriptions. Although Nic. has information about this species' colour (φλογερῇ εἰλυμένα χροιῇ), size (τυτθά) and appearance, he does not give us a proper designation, or even a provisional name; for φαλάγγια as a designation for spiders in general, rather than a particular species see 8 n. Maybe his prose source did not mention one, or perhaps this is an addition of his own, which would explain the dissimilarity in tone and structure between this section and the previous six.

**τυτθά:** a poeticism preferred to the prosaic μικρά, τυτθός being more common in Homer. This preference is shared by other Hellenistic poets: Apollonius uses τυτθός twenty-three times, μικρός not once. Callimachus uses (σ)μικρός eight times in the epigrams and once in the *Victory of Sosibius* (fr. 384.54 Pf.), but never in the hymns or the *Aetia* (although μικκός is occasionally used; cf. Hopkinson 1984, 47), where τυτθός occurs seven times. Theocritus (τυτθός 4×, no μικρός, but 5× μικκός) and Lycophron (1× τυτθός, 4× μικκός) similarly shun μικρός.

757 **κραδίη δὲ παραπλάζουσα μέμηνε:** small though the spider may be, the result of its bite is horrible. Gow & Scholfield translate "the mind wanders and is crazed", but it makes good sense to take κραδίη literally, pointing at palpitations or cardiac arrhythmia, in which case the heart's pace is said to be straying or wandering, not the mind. However, the overlap of κραδίη for both heart and mind is already found frequently in Homer, e.g. *Il.* 21.441, *Od.* 4.572, 5.389, where physical and mental elements are not clearly separable; for an analysis of κραδία (and similar nouns in Homer) used both for heart as the physical organ and as the 'mental apparatus' cf. Jahn (1987, *passim*) and Clarke (1999, 61ff.). If Gow & Scholfield's interpretation here is right there may be a connection to *Od.* 20.345–347 where Athena strikes the suitors with insanity and hysteria: μνηστῆρσι δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη | ἄσβεστον γέλω ὦρσε, παρέπλαγξεν δὲ νόημα | οἱ δ' ἤδη γναθμοῖσι γελοίων ἀλλοτρίοισιν [...]. When Homer and Nic. are thus compared we see (i) the use of the rare verb παραπλάζω, which has four instances in Homer, but is used metaphorically only here, as in Nic., although the latter's use is intransitive; (ii) insanity caused by the attack of a hostile entity; (iii) hysteria, manifest as uncontrolled laughter (Homer) or uncontrolled speech (*Ther.* 758). Russo etc. (1992, 124) comment that Athena's control of the suitors is 'outright possession', which is exactly what Nic. wants to convey: the spider's bite causes the victim even to lose control of his speech, which is heavily reminiscent of possession.

758 **γλῶσσα δ' ἄτακτα λέληκε:** 'his tongue shrieks disordered words'. For the utterance of disordered speech as a symptom of insanity see 757 n. Bing (2003, 339) notices that γλῶσσα ἄτακτα is the only other collocation in Greek literature of Philitas' Ἄτακτοι γλῶσσαι. According to Bing this line thus playfully alludes to Philitas' title, which is plausible considering Nic.'s fascination with obscure words (he wrote a work called Γλῶσσαι himseld), and Philitas' status as eminent proto-Hellenistic scholar. Bing shows that Philitas' collection of glosses consists not merely of explanations of Homeric rarities, but discusses the widely deviating meaning of certain words outside of Homer: "Mad departures from familiar speech: that might be an apt, if comically exaggerated way, of describing a central facet of Philitas *Disorderly Words* or *Unruly Tongues*. Did the spider bite Philitas?" If Bing's suggestion is correct Nic.'s reference indirectly points at himself, as he must realise that his description of the victim who utters strange and incomprehensible words is in fact highly applicable to the poet of the *Theriaca*.

**παρέστραπται δὲ καὶ ὄσσε:** according to Σ *Ther.* 758b, διάστροφοι γὰρ τοῦ πληγέντος οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, the eyes are somehow twisted; the same combination in Ath.

8.339 (διάστροφος τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς) means 'cross-eyed'. Gow & Scholfield's 'the eyes squint' may be right, although the phrasing suggests a more violent reaction, perhaps with the eyes turning in completely opposite directions.

**ὄσσε:** for the use of the dual see 231 n. and Introduction 6.3.

### 759–768 The *Cranocolaptes*

The treatment of spiders is followed by a peculiar animal, known as the κρανοκολάπτης (Σ *Ther.* 760a) or κεφαλοκρούστης (Σ *Ther.* 763a), 'head-pecker'. The origin of this name becomes clear in 766–767, where we see the lethal creature at work. Whether or not an encounter with the creature was considered to be likely (despite its apparent fictitious nature) is perhaps less relevant than its status as another horrifying and lethal creature, which cannot be left out in any account of grim monsters, such as the *Theriaca.*

759 **Φράζεο:** see 541 n.

**Αἰγύπτοιο:** see 200 n.

**οὐλοὸς αἶα:** in Homer αἶα, a metrical alternative for γαῖα, is only used at line-end (e.g. *Il.* 2.162, 3.243, 8.1), a usage observed by Nic. here, and in 168 and 388. Grammatically the adj. οὐλοός (on which see 352 n.) is of two endings, but here we seem to have the only example of οὐλοός with a fem. noun. We may assume another instance of *inconcinnitas*, a studied incongruence of a masc. adj. with a fem. noun. This need not surprise us, as similar incongruencies are found elsewhere in the poem; see Introduction 6.9. Here the poet's choice may be influenced by the similarity of the Homeric combination φυσίζοος αἶα.

Why is Egypt unfavourably referred to as an οὐλοὸς αἶα? The grim nature of the *cranocolaptes* of course triggers the use of the epithet here, and the dangers of Egypt have been pointed out in earlier passages too, viz. the *haemorrhoos* in 309–315 and the ruinous hippopotamus in 566–571. But these descriptions give little reason to consider Egypt as a whole any more grim than other regions that produce more dangerous creatures. It seems that any region harbouring poisonous animals is abhorred by the poet, irreverent of its location: to maintain a general sense of gloom all animals and their haunts are portrayed as negatively as possible, and moreover the impression is given that such creatures are found all over Egypt; cf. Introduction 8.2. Interestingly, in later sources it is often Libya that is considered to produce the most fearful monsters, cf. Ael. *NA* 2.7, 3.31 (of the *basilisk* and such monsters in general), 33 (of the asp), 36 (of the grape-

spider), 5.2 (snakehunters from Libya), Luc. *Dips.* 1–4 (all kinds of monsters) et al.

**760 κνώδαλα:** see 99 n.

**φαλλαίνῃ ἐναλίγκια:** a φαλλαίνα is technically a whale, which is clearly not the animal the poet has in mind here. Although some poets use the word for (marine) monsters in general (Ar. *V.* 35, 39, Lyc. 841), Nic.'s φαλλαίνα seems to be some kind of moth, explained by Σ *Ther.* 760b as the equally obscure ψώρα, or perhaps as a butterfly (ἡ παρ' ἡμῖν λεγομένη ψυχή). It is apparently vocabulary from Rhodes (τὰ περὶ λύχνους πετόμενα θηρία φάλαιναι καλοῦνται ὑπὸ Ῥοδίων); its obscurity no doubt explains for its appearance here, considering the poet's preference for rare glosses.

**760–761 τὴν περὶ λύχνους | … παιφάσσουσαν:** another glimpse of everyday life; see Introduction 8.2. The image of moths circling round a lamp at night is a familiar one and as such not remarkable. Yet in a poem as the *Theriaca* such vistas to everyday life create welcome breaks from the dry and sometimes tedious enumerations. The well-known image of moths singed by the flame as they approach too close, found in A. fr. 288 *TrGF*, Arist. *HA* 605b11, and later in Ael. *NA* 12.8 (citing Aeschylus) is not relevant here, although in Σ *Ther.* 763a κανδηλοσβέστης is used as a synonym for moth: the focus is not on the attraction of the lamp, but on the appearance of the creatures fluttering around it. On παίφασσε see also Livrea 1973a, 407.

**761 ἀκρόνυχος:** varying on the synonymous ἀκρέσπερος (25), for which it is an apt metrical alternative.

**παιφάσσουσαν:** 'fluttering', a rare verb debunked here in Nicandrean fashion. In its previous occurrences it is used for Athena (*Il.* 2.450) and Heracles (A.R. 4.1442) rushing around. Nic. uses it in a particularly domestic context, of moths darting around a lamp at evening.

**762 ἔγχνοα:** both Jacques and Spatafora retain the mss reading ἔγχλοα ('greenish'), but I follow Gow ('downy'). If the animal's wings are green indeed then I do not understand how this can be compared to someone who has touched dust (κονίης) or ashes (σπληδοῖο, next line). In either case the result would be a grey or blackish mark, not a green one.

**762–763 τοῖα κονίης | … ἐπαύρῃ:** the texture of the creature's wings is apparently compared to the sensation of touching dust or ashes with e.g. one's finger, i.e. dry or downy. Perhaps Nic. is thinking of the powdery subtance left on one's finger when a moth is touched. The grey or black mark that is left on the skin of someone who touches dust or ashes does not seem to be part of the comparison. Nothing is said about the colour of the creature's wings.

**763 σπληδοῖο:** 'ashes', elsewhere only in Lyc. 483, glossed (κατὰ γλῶσσαν) by Σ as ἡ σποδός. Whether Nic. picked it up from Lycophron or not, it is used here no doubt because of its rarity.

**764 τῷ ἴκελος:** τῷ must be fem. here, referring to the φαλλαίνη in 760. This remark points both at the weblike structure of its wings (στεγνά … πτερά, 762) and the dustlike texture of its wings (ἔγχνοα), not its (ashen?) colour. Contrary to the grand heroic comparisons of Homeric epic, Nic.'s plain description is taken from ordinary life, depicting someone who appears dusty, having incidentally touched upon ashes or dust. Despite its offbeat nature, the *Theriaca* is connected to the ordinary world through images from daily life; see Introduction 8.2.

**Περσῆος:** the persea-trea (περσέα) is a plumlike evergreen found in Egypt, although Posidonius tells us its fruit (πέρσειον) is found in Arabia and Syria (fr. 87 Theiler). There is something to say for the v.l. Περσεῖος, a Hellenistic preference used for nouns in -ευς; see Magnelli 2004, 30. Only here is the persea-tree (περσέα) referred to as Perse(i)os, in order to establish a relation to Perseus. Here the tree's etymology is merely hinted at, but in *Al.* 99–105 the origin of the tree and its name is given in full detail. Supposedly it grew on the very spot (in Mycenae, beneath the summit of Melanthis) where Perseus, in flight, after having killed Medusa, accidently lost the chape of his sword's scabbard. Such etymological play in the *Theriaca* is part of Nic.'s display of learning, sharing his insights into the nature of the terms he uses; see Introduction 6.6.

**765 σμερδαλέον:** among the vocabulary used to instill fear into to the reader—a powerful means of emotive allure within Nic.'s poetical technique—this is a favourite of Nic., this being its fifth appearance (to be followed by a sixth, the lexical variant σμερδνήν in 815); see 144 n.

**ὑποδράξ:** see 457 n. Technically the adv. (a Hellenistic coinage in -ξ, cf. Introduction 6.2) and its cognate predecessor ὑπόδρα (neut. plur. as adv.) refer to

someone looking ‘from under the brows’ (ὑπό-*δρακ, cf. δέρκομαι, Beekes 2010), thus expressing a dark or angry look; cf. Call. *Hec.* fr. 72 H. (374 Pf). As Holoka (1983, 16) points out, in Homer looking ‘darkly’ is ‘a nonverbal cue fraught with judgemental significance’ transmitting ‘an infraction of propriety’. If we are to apply this general meaning to this line, we see an animal looking superiorly and angrily as its domain is entered by humans, a transgression of the animal’s territory. Again the natural world is presented as a place of a danger, where humans do not belong; see 24 n. In the case of the *cranocolaptes*, which is probably a small creature (if we are to go by its juxtaposition to spiders and scorpions), it is improbable that the creature’s brows (if present at all) or even its eyes are clearly visible. The adv. thus has come to express ‘grim’ by itself, without referring to the actual mien of a creature. The creature’s look, unvarying by nature, is qualified by the poet as αἰέν, giving the impression that the creature’s evil nature is showing all the time. The result, a tiny creature with a perennial evil expression, is a comical exaggeration of what the *cranocolaptes* is really supposed to look like; cf. Introduction 8.4. For the apt characterization of such Nicandrean descriptions as verging on the grotesque, see Sistakou 2012, 213.

766 **ἐσκληκός:** see 718 n.

767 **ἐνεμάξατο:** an unexpected choice, as the simple verb is almost always used of kneading, which is not very apt of implanting a deadly sting in the victim. The compound is used for kneading bread in Ar. *Nu.* 676 (but cf. Dover 1968, 183), whereas in Call. *Dian.* 124 (σχέτλιοι, οἷς τύνη χαλεπὴν ἐμμάξεαι ὀργήν) it seems to be used metaphorically for sending or inflicting wrath; cf. *Ther.* 181 ἄϊδα προσμάξηται and Opp. *H.* 2.504, κακὴν ἐνεμάξατο κῆρα. Bornmann (1968, 62), however, sees a closer connection to the physical act of manual pressure in Call. *Dian.* 124 (‘imprimi il tuo segno’; cf Theoc. 17.37, where the unique compound εἰσμάσσομαι is used for pressing hands on a body), and argues for the literal ‘impasti’ over ‘infliggi’. If latter interpretation is correct, Nic.’s use at least has parallels, although feeble, outside the literal context of kneading.

**κεφαλῇ:** accounting for the *cranocolaptes*’ name (‘head-pecker’).

**φωτός:** see 752 n.

768 **ῥεῖα:** perhaps a reference to the opening of the poem, where the adv. (in the same *sedes*) points at the power of one who knows all about remedies. Here

the addressee is given a warning: a trained man easily wards off danger, but just as easily one falls victim to the assault of a *cranocolaptes*; in Nic.'s world danger is ubiquitous.

**θανάτοιο ... μοῖραν:** varying on θανάτοιο ... αἶσα in 120. With regard to contents αἶσα and μοῖρα are used without distinction—both are suitable Homeric synonyms—, but μοῖρα is to be preferred metrically here to avoid hiatus. In Homer θάνατος and μοῖρα are always found as a *hendiadys* (followed by Nic. in 410), the only exception being *Il.* 13.602.

### *769–804 Scorpions*

#### 769–771 The White Scorpion

After the various sorts of spiders and the *cranocolaptes*, the poet turns his attention to the evil works of the scorpion. Whereas the different kinds of spiders are distinguished by their form, and their likeness to certain shapes (star, grape), the scorpions are mainly distinguished by colour, which is apparently not as good a criterion as it seems (Gow & Scholfield 1953, 21–22; see also Papadopoulou 2009). It is likely Nic. is following his source here, without giving new information based on expertise.

**769 εἰ δέ:** for this combination at line-opening as a typical element of Hesiod's didactic poetry see 57 n. and Introduction 5.10.

**καὶ κέντρῳ κεκορυθμένον:** 'armed with a sting too', i.e. just like the *cranocolaptes*. The transition from the category of spiders to scorpions via the 'head-pecker' runs smoothly, as scorpions have their sting in common with the latter (κέντρον, 766). This makes better sense than Gow & Scholfield's paratactic interpretation of καί. Jacques (2002, 60), however, connects καί with αὐδήσω in the next line. The verb (with an instrumental dat. of the arms) goes back to Homer, pointing at armament as preparation for war, e.g. *Il.* 5.562, 7.206, 17.199, typically with αἴθοπι χαλκῷ or δοῦρε δύω ... χαλκῷ. For the portrayal of animals as battle-warriors see Introduction 8.8.

**ἀλγινόεντι:** un-Homeric, but used at line-end in Hes. *Th.* 214 of 'Οϊζύς, 'Misery', the personified daughter of Night, and 226, of Πόνος, 'Agony', the personified daughter of Eris. The adj. is otherwise not very common, and it is not improbable that Nic. has the Hesiodic undertones of suffering in mind here. If this is the case, Nic.'s qualification of the scorpion's sting carries not only the idea of mere pain, but of inevitable and enduring agony; cf. Introduction 7.3.

770 **σκορπίον:** the treatment of the category of scorpions was heralded earlier in the poem; see 654 n.

**αὐδήσω:** for the use of first person verbs as structural markers see Introduction 5.10 and 636 n. The first person fut. employed here is not dissimilar to Pindar's use in his epinicia, i.e. not in reference to a distant moment in the future, but as a text-internal reference, pointing at the continuation of the poem in the lines that are to follow immediately. This type has been considered a so-called 'performative future', indicating that the information presented as object of the fut. verb is actually told in the act of the fut. verb (yielding an odd coincidence of future and present), but as Pfeijffer (1999b) has shown there is no reason to consider such future indicatives as a variant of the present, *pace* Faraone 1995. αὐδήσω does not, however, mean that the treatment of the white scorpion will follow somewhere later on in the poem (or even in another poem) but starts directly after the fut. verb itself here. The effect of such a future is that the addressee is alerted that more, new information is about to be expounded, as the teacher is about to add another section to his account. See Introduction 4.2.

**ἀεικέα γενέθλην:** what does Nic. mean by labelling an entire species ἀεικής? The adj. surely has negative connotations in Homer, though not of a moral nature: cf. De Jong 1987, 138. When applied to someone's appearance (e.g. *Od.* 24.250) it may express dirtiness, and Gow & Scholfield's 'disgusting' points in that direction, but this does not explain why the scorpion would be any dirtier than spiders or snakes. It seems the adj. is used here to express both the nasty look of the scorpion and its vile character, as underlining the evil nature per se of all poisonous animals is a typical feature of the *Theriaca* and as such not surprising here. The adj. can also merely refer to the poisonous nature of the animal, irreverent of appearance or character (cf. Opp. *H.* 2.422–423, στομάτεσσι δ' ἀεικὴς | ἰὸς ἐνιτρέφεται στυγερός). The next line, however, makes clear that some kinds of scorpions are in fact harmless.

771 **ἀκήριος:** 'harmless', as opposed to 'unharmed' (190). This meaning seems to be unique. Its rare antonym (πολυκήριος, 798), however, shows that such an interpretation is valid. It is striking that the poet chooses to give the Homeric epithet a new additional meaning (cf. 190 n.), although of course we cannot be certain that such an alternative meaning already existed. Giving Homeric words new meaning, a characteristic of much learned Alexandrian poetry, is particularly considered a feature of the poetic diction of Apollonius and Callimachus.

**ἐπιλωβής:** a coinage, here and in 35, similar to ἐπιλώβητος (Lyc. 1173, qualifying γένος). The adj. simply expresses that the stinging of the white scorpion causes no harm, yet in a lofty tone. It is not a synonym of ἀκήριος here, as there seems to be a gradual anticlimax: this particular kind does not cause κήρ (death), or even λώβη (non-lethal harm; see 773 n.). As Gow & Scholfield (1953, 22) point out, the white scorpion is probably not a particular species at all: it is only what a young—and therefore still harmless—scorpion looks like.

### 772–774 The Sorpion with Red Jaws

772 **πυρσός:** this form, without progressive assimilation, is all but limited to tragedy and Doric poetry (although in Theocritus πυρρός seems equally valid; Chryssafis 1981, 236); as usual, the more exclusive variant is preferred.

**δ' αὖ γενύεσσι:** a somewhat puzzling detail, implying that this scorpion causes envenomation as it bites with its jaws (technically called *chelicerae*), rather than stinging with its tail; cf. Σ *Ther.* 772a, where ἐν γενύεσσι is explained as ἐν τῷ δήγματι. Jacques' emendation (αὖ) gets rid of the awkward ἐν; for ἐν γενύεσσι meaning 'in/with its jaws' cf. A.R. 2.281, Opp. *H.* 2.286, 472, 4.227, 5.497, 638. Instead Nic. is perhaps referring to the kind of scorpion that is red 'on its jaws'. Jacques' observation (already suggested by Gow & Scholfield) that γενύεσσι refers to the jaws of the scorpion (cf. 785), not the victim, seems correct; Jacques 2002, 212, cf. Touwaide 1997, 192 with n. 199. For Gow & Scholfield's interpretation see 774 n.

**προσέμαξατο:** see 767 n.

773 **λώβαις:** whereas in 771 the white scorpion is said to be οὐδ' ἐπιλωβής, this one, by contrast, is explicitly said to cause λώβαι. The use of λώβη for an inflicted wound is rare, as elsewhere the noun does not express literal damage, but outrage (*Il.* 11.142, *Od.* 18.347), disgrace (*Il.* 3.42), or at least destruction of a non-physical nature (e.g. S. *Ant.* 792). Even in *Ther.* 132 λώβη has clear overtones of outrage and not merely of ruin. In Hdt. 3.154 the noun expresses the act of mutilation, though not the wound itself. It is only later that λώβη becomes a technical term, as Galen (14.757 Kühn) uses it for a form of leprosy. It seems thus that the poet gives λώβη a new value here, using a charged word in a new and neutral context, thus adding the noun to the poetic set of words created for this poem.

774 **ἐπί:** 'moreover', i.e. in addition to the wild convulsions described in the previous line. If, however, Gow & Scholfield are correct in taking γενύεσσι in

772 as referring to the mouth of the victim, which seems less likely, it could be constructed with ἐπί here, 'on it [i.e. the jaws, 'mouth'] a mighty thirst rises'; for the idea of thirst concentrated on the mouth cf. 339, where dry lips are said to be shrivelling from thirst. Jacques's solution ('là-dessus … la soif s'élève') is less elegant, as it implies that the thirst travels up from the wound (which is probably on the lower part of the body) to the throat and mouth, where it is normally felt (cf. 339).

### 775–776 The Black Scorpion

775 **ζοφόεις:** in his treatment of scorpions Aelian (*NA* 6.20) closely follows Nic.'s order, leaving little doubt about the source he used. The black scorpion, however, is referred to as καπνώδη … καὶ μέλανα, which shows that ζοφόεις, a poeticism and probably a coinage (see 34 n.) is not only unsuitable for prose, but also hard to understand, meaning either 'smoke-coloured' or 'black'.

**ἄραδον κακόν:** 'agitation' or perhaps 'palpitation', apparently a medical term, before Nic. only found in the Hippocratic corpus. Just like fever (772) and thirst (774), palpitations are found in earlier descriptions as symptoms of envenoming (see 757 n.). The jingle of the adj. highlights the unusual term, and the whole line, holodactylic and consisting only of disyllabic and trisyllabic words, gives a jagged impression, expressing the line's contents well.

776 **παραπλῆγες δὲ καὶ ἄφραστον γελόωσιν:** the mental derangement described here bears resemblance to 757–758, where the effects of a spider's bite are expounded, although again details are missing concerning the outcome. The sensational symptoms of lunacy and insane behaviour show the poet's keen interest in horror. As usual, commiseration is not on Nic.'s mind.

### 777–781 The Green Scorpion

777 **γυῖον:** the sg. is very rare. It is used either as a true sg., as in Theoc. 22.121, where it is used as fist or forearm in opposition to the limbs, or as a collective, indicating the whole body, as in Pi. *N.* 7.73. It is hard to decide which Nic. has in mind here; its rarity itself probably accounts for its presence here, without further significance.

778 **κακή … χάλαζα:** according to White (1987, 4) χάλαζα points at the fact that the victim feels like he has been struck by hail, i.e. very cold; cf. 13–14 n. Although this makes more sense than Gow & Scholfield's idea of a hail-like eruption on the skin, it is somewhat difficult to combine with εἴδεται ἐμπλάζουσα ('appears to set in') in the next line. If εἴδεται is to be taken literally,

χάλαζα is not merely describing the sensation of hail-like cold, but probably refers to actual moist on the skin. Although this is of course not really hail, the victim's cold sweat at least makes him look like he just got out of a hailstorm.

779 **καὶ ἣν μέγα Σείριος ἄζῃ:** see 205 n. and 368 n. Sirius is used virtually proverbially for the most intense heat imaginable, thus underlining how exceptional the victim's condition is.

780 **τοίῃ οἱ κέντροιο … τοῖαι δ' ἐπὶ κέντρῳ:** a double anaforic *polyptoton*. Such rhetorical figures, here drawing attention to both the frightening stinger and the tail of vertebrae connected to it—two striking visual elements of the scorpion—, are not very frequent in the *Theriaca*.

**κοπίς:** literally (κόπτω) some kind of cleaver, be it an axe (Leon. Tarent. *AP* 6.129.2 = *HE* 2176), sword (X. *Cyr.* 2.1.9), or knife (adjectivally in E. *Cyc.* 241, but see Seaford 1984, 151). It is not used elsewhere as a biological term for the 'blade' of a scorpion's stinger and it is probable that Nic. borrowed the word on purpose to express the violent nature of the κέντρον: the scorpion's stinger is not merely a natural appendice, but a weapon of war. As such the description of the scorpion follows Nic.'s general pattern of comparing animals to warriors by using battle imagery; see Introduction 8.8.

781 **κεραίης:** as Jacques (2002, 215) points out, κεραίη can hardly 'mean' head, as Gow & Scholfield translate ("nine-jointed vertebrae extend above its head"). Jacques' emendation to καρήνου is, however, unnecessary. The mss reading κεραίης makes good sense, not as 'head', but referring to the characteristic shape of the scorpion's tail; κεραίη can be used for anything shaped like a horn, from the projecting beam of a construction crane (Th. 4.100, Plb. 8.5.10) to the horns of the moon (Arat. 785, 790). In this case Nic. tells us that the nine-jointed vertebrae of the scorpion's horned shape stretch out exceedingly, as expressed by the preverb. The meaning of Σ *Ther.* 781c (τῆς οὐρᾶς), rejected by Jacques, is therefore correct after all: it does not state that κεραίη literally means οὐρά, but merely that κεραίη is describing the shape of οὐρά here.

### 782–785 The Livid Scorpion

782–783 **βοσκάδα νηδύν | εὐρεῖαν:** perhaps added as a marked visual characteristic of the livid scorpion. But the addition also seems to explain for the bite of this scorpion, which allegedly uses its jaws instead of its stinger, an oddity rationalised by Nic. here, who wants to show that the scorpion's jaws are so

powerful because it eats all day to satisfy its ravenous appetite (αἰὲν ἄητος, 783). The enjambment serves to underline that this species looks strikingly well-fed indeed. As an adj. βοσκάς ('greedy') is very rare (here and *Al.* 293), but the compound αἰθεριβόσκας is found before Nic. in Cerc. *CA* 1.3, p. 202. As a noun it is mentioned in Arist. *HA* 593b17 for some sort of duck.

783–784 **ποηφάγος … | γαιοφάγος:** there do not seem to be herbivorous scorpions, eating grass or earth, and although in Call. *Hec.* fr. 56 H. (365 Pf.) ποιηφάγον refers to someone collecting ears of corn behind the harvesters, i.e. not eating them (cf. Hollis 2009, 208), the context in the *Theriaca* suggests that the scorpion picks grass for its own consumption. Either Nic. (or his source) is making serious observational errors, or perhaps he assumes that the round and well-fed paunch of the livid scorpion can only have grown this size by grazing all the time like a cow, an assumption emphasised by the particle δή. Hollis (2009, 207) assumes that in Callimachus γαιοφάγος refers to those 'who have to eat what they can gather on the earth', i.e. poor people, but such an interpretation does not apply to Nic. The appearance of both the rare ποιήφαγον and γηφάγοι—if constructed correctly—in Call. *Hec.* frr. 55–56 H. (290, 365 Pf.) in a different context is striking, but does not help much to explain Nic.'s statements here. γαιοφάγος, here emphatically in enjambed position, is an extension of ποιηφάγος, 'an eater of grass, always insatiable, an eater even of earth'.

785 **τοίη οἱ βούβρωστις … γενύεσσι:** see 782 n. The assault on the groin is not said to be venomous; if it is incurable (ἀλίαστον) it is only because of the force with which the animal bites. Scorpions do not bite, and perhaps Nic. is thinking of a scorpion-like spider, which would explain both the jaws and the broad belly (νηδύν | εὐρεῖαν, 782–783).

**βούβρωστις:** either 'hunger' or 'greed'; see 409 n. Of course the idea is not that the scorpion is starving and therefore lean (like Erysichthon, who is hungry despite his eating, Call. *Cer.* 92–93, see 409 n.), but that its belly is large exactly because of its eating. In addition, the livid scorpion's eating habits are considered an explanation for the firmness of its jaws and the eagerness of its bite.

### 786–796 Two Crablike Species

786 **δήεις:** see 100 n.

786–787 **ἐναλίγκιον αἰγιαλῆι | καρκίνῳ:** this next kind perhaps follows through association: after the description of the previous scorpion, which used its jaws instead of its stinger, the poet proceeds with other kinds of scorpions

that use their jaws, or claws, resembling crabs. This is probably the so-called emperor scorpion, which indeed strongly resembles a crab.

787 **μνία:** according to Gigante Lanzara (2000, 263) μνίον is a neologism, coined by Lycophron (398) and explained by Σ Lyc. 398 Scheer as anything that sticks to rocks in the sea, either looking like wool or consisting of herbs.

**ῥόθον … ἅλμης:** see 672 n. Both Gow & Scholfield and Jacques consider ῥόθος to refer to the rushing noise of the surf. If, however, Nic. is using the same Boeotian gloss as in 672, the rare noun does not indicate sound but a path of traces, left by the retreating sea. The crab is thus not feeding on the surf itself but on its traces in the sand, i.e. on whatever is left on the beach.

789 **ἐσκλήκασι:** see 718 n.

791 **Τῶν δὴ καὶ γενεὴν ἐξέμμορον:** literally 'from them (i.e. crabs) of course they (i.e. scorpions) obtain their lot as offspring'. The form ἐξέμμορον is a curiosity for different reasons: (i) as a compound ἐξέμμορον is based on *Od.* 5.335, θεῶν ἐξ ἔμμορε τιμῆς, which was read by Nic.—among others—as ἐξέμμορε, being the only instance of the compound before Nic.; some texts retain the compound, e.g. Von der Mühll 1946. (ii) technically, as found in Homer and Hesiod, it is a perf. from the composite ἐκ-μείρομαι, the double -μ- going back to an earlier *σεσμορε (from *σμερ-γω; Beekes 922) with regressive assimilation. The epsilon thus has the value of a reduplication, not a proper augment. Hellenistic poets, however, struggling with this Homeric rarity, which had become a relic by then, considered the epsilon to be an augment of the thematic aor., and consequently introduced a form ἔμμορες (A.R. 3.4, 4.62), treating the ἔμμορον as a second aor.; cf. Campbell 1994, 11. This led to the formation of a new perf., viz. μεμόρηκε, found in Nic. *Al.* 213; Chantraine 678.

The idea that certain kinds of animals are grown out of others is reminiscent of the *bougonia* and *hippogonia*; see 741 n. for these and other cases. Ovid gives an outline of 'well-known' (though predominantly fantastic) cases in *Met.* 15.361–390, leading up to the special case of the phoenix, and in 369–371 we learn about the engendering of crab-like scorpions from dead crabs, *concava litoreo si demas bracchia cancro,* | *cetera supponas terrae, de parte sepulta* | *scorpius exibit caudaque minabitur unca.*

792 **πολυστίοιο:** the adj. is probably a Callimachean coinage (*Jov.* 26), based on στῖον, 'river pebble', apparently a Sicyonian gloss (Σ A.R. 2.1172), added as one of the many Doricisms in Callimachus' *Hymns*. Callimachus follows

Apollonius' strict use for river pebbles only, but Nic., including sea pebbles here and in *Al.* 466 (though not in *Ther.* 950), apparently adheres to a less strict use; McLennan 57–58. The combination πολυστίοιο θαλάσσης, at line-end, seems to be in turn a variation of the famous and metrically equivalent phrase πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης (8× in Homer); see Introduction 7.3.

793 **δελαστρέες:** 'using bait'. Bait (δελέατα) is used by two anglers in Theoc. 21.10.

**ἰχθυβολῆες:** 'fishermen', found earlier in Leon. Tarent. *AP* 7.504.2 (*HE* 2372) and Call. *Del.* 15. It is metrically equivalent to ἀσπαλιῆες in 704, which shows the poet's keenness on variation in the *Theriaca*; the simple ἁλιῆας constitutes a third variant in 823. For the portrayal of fishermen as another glimpse to daily life in the poem see Introduction 8.2. The fishermen mentioned here appear to be fishing from the shore (just like the ἀσπαλιῆες in 704), not in boats out at sea, unlike the ἁλιῆας in 823; see, however, 796 n.

794 **γρώνῃσιν:** 'holes', 'cavities'. According to Spatafora (2007a, 100) γρώνη ('subterranean cavity') is not synonymous to either φωλεόν (32, 'cavity for hibernation') or γωλεά (125, 351, 'the cavity of a hole') but the differences seem very slight.

796 **καθ' ἕρκεα:** elsewhere only in *Od.* 20.164 (same *sedes*), where it means 'in the courtyard', of tame well-fattened pigs fed in the compound of Odysseus' palace; cf. Russo etc. 1992, 116–117. The interpretation in the *Theriaca* depends on the context: if the crabs are hauled into a fishing-boat by the fishermen in 793, the 'mouseholes' (γρώνῃσιν … μυοδόκοις, 794–795), containing the newborn scorpions, can be expected to be found in the boat itself. If this is the case the ἕρκεα are perhaps fishing nets, or it is a periphrasis of the confines of the boat itself. Alternatively, and more probably, the crabs are taken onto the beach by anglers and consequently run off to look for shelter on the shore, in which case καθ' ἕρκεα is more likely to be a general remark about the usual haunts of scorpions, as is reflected by Gow & Scholfield's 'from wall and fence'; cf. 21 n. where the poet talks about the presence of snakes in or near farmsteads. This use would not only be close to Homer, but also a clear inversion: in Homer the presence of fattened pigs in the courtyard is a good sign, whereas in Nic.'s world the security of one's home is violated by present danger.

**λωβητῆρες:** a Homeric noun, not very common; this is the only instance where the noun is used for animals. According to Hunter (1989, 139), commenting

on A.R. 3.372, λωβητήρ is 'a general term of abuse'; cf. Campbell 1994, 320. In the *Theriaca*, however, the scorpions' designation refers to physical damage to their victims (see 771 n. on ἐπιλωβής; 774 n. on λώβαις). The noun, combined with κακοφθόρα in the previous line, once again underlines the poet's stance: scorpions are not merely natural inconveniences, but evil entities.

### 797–798 The Honey-Coloured Scorpion

**798** **ἄσβεστον ... πολυκήριον:** the privative alpha complements the use of the prefix πολυ- to underline the dread of the affliction. If ἄσβεστος is meant literally there is no cure for the sting of this kind of scorpion, despite Nic.'s claim in 805 et al. It is more likely, however, that the adj. is merely a poetic exaggeration. πολυκήριον is a very rare and perhaps original antonym of ἀκήριος, on which see 771 n. The only other instance appears to be a Roman inscription of a literary epitaph from the second or third century CE (*GVI* 1283 = *IGUR* 1163).

**ἄτην:** it is striking that Nic. always uses ἄτη at line-end, both in the *Theriaca* and the *Alexipharmaca*, a practice not based on Homer. Perhaps Nic. was influenced by Apollonius, who does the same (20× out of 32).

### 799–804 The Fiery-Red Scorpion

**799** **ἔχθιστος ... ἀνδράσι:** although the order of Nic.'s enumeration of scorpions seems somewhat arbitrary, this species shows to be part of a climactic progression, as the most dreaded kind is saved for last.

**800** **νηπιάχοις:** a rare epicism, used adjectivally in Homer as a diminutive of νήπιος, always qualifying παῖς, *Il.* 2.338, 6.408, 16.262. Apart from Phaedimus (*AP* 6.271.5 = *HE* 2905) it was picked up by Apollonius, but Nic. is the first poet to use it as a noun. For the poignant collocation of νηπιάχοις and ἀνδράσι cf. Call. *AP* 7.453 (*HE* 1249–1250 = 19 Pf.), Δωδεκέτη τὸν παῖδα πατὴρ ἀπέθηκε Φίλιππος, where a similar juxtaposition underlines the tragedy of a living adult and a dead child.

**παρασχεδόν:** 'straightaway', a favourite of Apollonius (10×), who is the first to use the adv. and apparently introduced it as a prosodic alternative to αὐτοσχεδόν; see Cuypers 1997, 42–43. Its metrical *sedes* is after the trochaic caesura, which is observed by Nic., here and in *Al.* 207. From a certain perspective a fast death seems preferable to a slow, painful one. But in the context of the *Theriaca* such remarks serve a different purpose, pointing out the necessity of ready action by an expert, instructed by his learned teacher, the poet.

**ἤγαγεν:** for the use of the aor. see 202 n.

**801 περί:** for the postpositive use see Introduction 6.8 and 137 n.

**πτερὰ λευκά:** as Jacques (2002, 220) points out, the winged one (like the *cranocolaptes*, 759–762) is saved till the end, just as in the description of spiders. Here the winged scorpion, the most spectacular—and equally fictitious—scorpion rounds off the account. Winged scorpions, however, do not exist, despite Lucian's (*Dips.* 3) claim of their existence in the south of Libya; for other unveracious accounts about flying scorpions see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 186.

**802 μάστακι σιτοφάγῳ ἐναλίγκια:** in Homer μάσταξ means 'mouth' or 'mouthful', but according to Σ *Il.* 9.324a Erbse it is also used for 'locust' (τὴν ἀκρίδα), which is of course what the poet has in mind here. The noun is rare, and apart from a late instance in Artem. 2.21 the only previous instance seems to be S. fr. 716 *TrGF* from the play *Phineus*, where it is used metaphorically for the Harpies. The adj. σιτοφάγος is very rare (apart from the instance in Homer only in Hdt. 4.109) and the combination μάστακι σιτοφάγῳ seems to be in imitation of ἀνδρί γε σιτοφάγῳ (*Od.* 9.191), which is metrically equivalent. Once again a marked Homerism is reused in a new and contrasting context; see Introduction 7.3. The adj. is particularly poignant for cultured human beings, as opposed to the cannibalistic ogre Polyphemus, who turns out to be ἀνδροφάγος in *Od.* 10.200; for the relevance of words like σιτοφάγος as belonging strictly to the realm of human culture cf. Kirk 1970, 166 and Vidal-Naquet 1986, 15 ff.[17] Nic. wilfully borrows the adj. and applies it to locusts, which are grain-eating indeed, but not in the Homeric sense: the Homeric adj. is not merely given a new context, but a context that brings out a marked inversion of the connotation of σιτοφάγος; see Introduction 7.3.

**ταί θ' ὑπὲρ ἄκρων:** according to White (1987, 55) the noun serves to point playfully at the etymology of ἀκρίς, for which μάσταξ is a synonym here. Ancient debate sometimes connected the designation ἀκρίς for locusts to their habit of feeding on the tips (ἄκριες) of ears of corn; Σ *Il.* 21.12a Erbse, ἢ παρὰ τὸ ἀκρίζειν, ὅ ἐστι τὰ ἄκρα ἐσθίειν; *EM* 52.37 s.v. ἀκρίς, οἱ δὲ, παρὰ τὸ τὰς ἄκρας τῶν ἀσταχύων καὶ

17 In. *HA* 578b2 Aristotle purports to cite Homer, θρέψεν ἔπι χλούνην σῦν ἄγριον· οὐδὲ ἐῴκει | θηρί γε σιτοφάγῳ, ἀλλὰ ῥίῳ ὑλήεντι. Not only is this a curious conflation of *Il.* 9.539 and *Od.* 9.190 but it also suggests that the use of σιτοφάγος for animals is common, contrary to our proper attestations.

τῶν φυτῶν νέμεσθαι. Of course in this case the use of ὑπὲρ ἄκρων would only be an indirect etymology as it does not explain the meaning of μάσταξ itself. For etymology in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.6.

**803 ἱπτάμενοι:** see 456 n.

**λεπυρόν:** 'husky', a Nicandrean adj., used here and in 136. It qualifies a natural shell, be it an egg (as in 136), or the husks of grain meant here.

**804 Πήδασα:** it is not clear whether Nic. is referring to the Carian city of the same name in the mountainous area between Colophon and Halicarnassus (cf. Hdt. 1.174), to the mountain of the same name, or perhaps to Πίδασα, a fortified Carian settlement on Mount Grion; cf. Olshausen 2000, 466–467.

**Κισσοῖο κατὰ πτύχας:** the rare phrasing κατὰ πτύχας, referring to the glens of a mountain range or at least a hilly site, is borrowed from *Il.* 11.77, δώματα καλὰ τέτυκτο κατὰ πτύχας Οὐλύμποιο (*same sedes*). Apart from E. *IT* 1082, it was picked up earlier by Apollonius in 2.992 (ἄλσεος Ἀκμονίοιο κατὰ πτύχας) and 3.113 (Οὐλύμποιο κατὰ πτύχας, varying on Homer). The location of Cissus is unclear, as many places of the same name are known; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 186.

### *805–836 Various Dangerous Creatures*

#### 805–810 Two Kinds of Bees

After the treatment of various kinds of dangerous spiders (715–768) and scorpions (769–804) Nic. proceeds with a third category, which consist mainly of leftovers. First dangerous bees are treated, which creates a smooth transition from the description of the winged scorpion (799–804) to other winged animals.

**805 Οἶδά … φράσσασθαι:** for the opening of a new section with a verb that underlines the theme of learning—a standard feature of didactic poetry—see Introduction 5.10. The verb οἶδα in particular serves to restate the poet's vast knowledge, both in his capacity as teacher and as man of learning. The meaning is, however, deceptive: Nic. knows how to tell us many things, but most of his knowledge comes from books, presented nevertheless as empirical information.

**ἀλέξια:** see 702 n.

**τοῖο:** referring to the scorpion, to be understood as the whole category of scorpions as treated in 769–804. By means of οἷά in 806 the transition from the previous to the new category is thus completed.

**βολάων:** technically of wounds caused by objects thrown (βάλλω). Here the opposition between βολή (of missiles) and πληγή (of swords or pikes) does not apply, as scorpions can of course attack only from close by. Nic. may, however, be exaggerating on purpose, portraying scorpions as warriors who not only attack simply with their stinger, but are all but masters of ballistics. The association also triggers the idea of scorpion assaults that are as painful as if one were hit by an arrow; cf. the adj. ἰοβόλος.

806 **βέμβικος:** 'wasp', normally used for spinning or revolving objects, e.g. a whipping-top (Ar. *Av.* 1461, Call. *AP* 7.89.9 = *HE* 1285 = 1 Pf.), a whirlpool (Opp. *H.* 5.222), or the spinning movement itself (Ar. *V.* 1531). It seems to be used for animals only by Nic., here and in *Al.* 183, although such an interpretation does not seem impossible in Ar. *V.* 1531 either, βέμβικες ἐγγενέσθων ('may you become buzzing wasps!'); apparently they are also known as βόμβυκες (Σ *Al.* 183, cf. Hsch.). Although identification of the animal is difficult, its juxtaposition to μέλισσαι, πεμφρηδών and σφῆκές in *Al.* 183–184 warrants the interpretation of a wasp-like creature. If Nic. is the first to use the noun for an animal it seems to be an innovation of the kenning-type. One of the animal's characteristic traits, viz. the sound it makes, becomes its new nominator, replacing the animal's proper name. For the use of kennings in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.7.

**ὀρεστέρου:** a poetic synonym of ὀρεινός, going back to Homer (*Il.* 22.93), who uses it for a mountain snake (δράκων). The adj. seems to show the difference between the wild βέμβιξ (Σ *Al.* 183b, ὄρειαι = ἄγριαι), as opposed to cultivated bees. Alternatively, the appearance of βέμβικες ὄρειαι in *Al.* 183 gives the impression that the adj. (and its synonym) are considered epithets of the βέμβιξ in a mock-Homeric manner.

807 **ᾗ τε καί … εὖτε χαράξῃ:** we would expect a statement about the danger of the bee's sting (κέντρον) to its victims here. Nic. is, however, referring to the danger of a bee's sting to itself, as is explained in 810. Yet the phrasing is reminiscent of 4–6, where the condition (εὖτε in the same *sedes*) of attack is applied to field labourers.

808 **ἄνδρα πέριξ σίμβλοιο πονεύμενον:** another vista to everyday life. The rustic labourer—Nic. probably has a beekeeper in mind here—working near a hive

or between flowers is reminiscent of similar depictions earlier in the poem, e.g. the field workers encountering poisonous spiders in 752. For Nic.'s use of such recognisable scenery in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.2.

**ἢ καχίλοισι:** Gow & Scholfield's ἠὲ καὶ ἀγροίς makes good sense, cf. ἦμος ἀν' ἀγρούς, in the same *sedes* at line-end in 23; some places are separated out as particularly risky, but the addition of the fields adds to the omnipresence of the danger of poisonous animals. Jacques' proposal as printed here, however, although poorly attested (only mentioned in Hesychius as a synonym for ἄνθη) gives a more likely place to encounter dangerous bees: around the hive, or near flowers.

**810** **κέντρον:** this is not the only anaphora in the poem (cf. 238–239, 226–227, 591–592), yet Gow & Scholfield consider it suspect. As a rhetorical anaphora it does not look very accomplished, and the line does have the appearance of an explanatory insertion from a scholiast. It is, however, metrically correct and not out of place, explaining the poet's statement in 807. As such it is therefore not evidently an interpolation.

### 811–821 Millipede, Two Kinds of Wasps, Centipede, Shrew, *Seps*, Salamander

Nic. proceeds with various other animals that defy clear categorisation. One thing they have in common, though, is their dangerous nature. At the same time the poet underlines his vast knowledge of every single poisonous creature, repeating οἶδα at line-opening (cf. 805). The verb thus functions as a marker of the poet's knowledge, which creates a shift in focus: are the animals central to the poem, or is the poet himself ultimately the centre of attention? The brief enumeration of several creatures in a short space, without details about their precise nature, supports the latter assumption. At times the poem seems to be primarily a vehicle of the poet's knowledge; even statements that purport to impart wisdom are often centred around the teacher, not his teachings; see Schneider 1962, 11–12.

**811** **Οἶδά γε μήν:** see 805 n.

**ἴουλος:** Gow & Scholfield (1953, 186–187) are thinking of a woodlouse. According to Scarborough (1980, 138–140) neither woodlice nor sow bugs, pill bugs or isopods can be meant, as none of them are dangerous. According to him therefore, ἴουλος must refer to a centipede or millipede, which is known to disperse some kind of poisonous acid. Likewise Aristotle classifies the ἴουλος

together with the σκολόπενδρα (millepede) as a wingless creature (*HA* 523b18). Though this may sound logical, it does not explain why a millipede would be enumerated among flying animals like bees (810) and wasps (811), unless Nicander considered it capable of flying.

**ἅ μήδεται:** an interesting choice of verb, as it again shows Nic.'s custom of portraying animals anthropomorphically as having bad intent; see Introduction 8.1. The verb means 'plan', but—at least in epic—has a negative undertone, ('plot', 'plan cunningly', 'contrive'), e.g. *Il.* 10.52, 21.19, 413, *Od.* 3.303, 11.474. Even a centipede (if this is the correct interpretation), a perhaps dangerous, yet relatively powerless animal, is thus said to plot against humans; see also 8.4.

**ἠδ' ὀλοὸς σφήξ:** see 352 n.

812 **πεμφρηδὼν ὀλίγη:** apparently some sort of wasp, judging by its juxtaposition to μέλισσαι, σφῆκές and βέμβικες ὄρειαι in *Al.* 183–184; cf. 806 n. According to Σ *Al.* 183a the *pemphredon* is larger than an ant but smaller than a bee, which corresponds with ὀλίγη.

**ἀμφικαρὴς σκολόπενδρα:** placed chiastically with πεμφρηδὼν ὀλίγη, which makes the line fall neatly into two hemistichs, filled out by two different creatures. The *scolopendra*, a millipede, is given the same curious quality as the snake called *amphisbaena* (372–383), viz. having a head at either end of its body (cf. ἀμφικάρηνον, 373).

813 **ἥ τε καί ... κῆρα:** although the toxins secreted by the millipede can cause heavy burns, in the real world they are unpleasant at worst. To state that the millipede 'bestows death upon men' is a gross exaggeration. The use of ἀμφοτέρωθεν makes the creature's appearance ever more fearful, as if it is twice as dangerous—and therefore twice as lethal—in Nic.'s depiction. The poet's choice for κήρ, a noun associated with violent death and characteristic of epic battle, again shows his portrayal of the natural world. Nic.'s world is dominated by the perennial contrast between deadly enemies and prudent humans; see Introduction 8.8.

814 **νήιά θ' ὡς ... πτερά:** this simile, in which an animal is likened to the movement of a ship, is reminiscent of 268, where the crooked progression of the *cerastes* was compared to the tossing movement of a small boat behind a merchantman; see 268 n. Here one of the most striking characteristics of the millipede (i.e. apart from its purported two heads, cf. 812) is highlighted, viz. its

manifold legs, moving in quick succession. The phrasing is somewhat cryptic, as it suggests the presence of wings (πτερά) on the animal. This in turn suggests we are dealing with another winged creature in the succession of bees and wasps in the previous lines. The use of πτερά for the oars of a ship goes, however, back to Homer (*Od.* 11.125 = 23.272, εὐήρε' ἐρετμά, τά τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται). What we have here is thus a simile (a millipede's legs compared to a ship's oars) based on an earlier, apparently ossified, simile (a ship's oars compared to the wings of birds). The simile may have been inspired by Lyc. 23, where ships are called ἰουλόπεζοι, 'footed like a millipede', therefore 'many-oared'. Although σπέρχονται implies that the *tertium comparationis* lies in the speed of the movement of both ship and animal, the movement itself—evenly, progressing on the right and left side, moving from the lower side, and bearing close visual resemblance—can of course not be ignored either; see Introduction 8.7.

**815–816 τυφλήν … | μυγαλέην:** somewhat unexpectedly among the previous animals an ordinary shrewmouse appears. This creature can be nasty indeed, not because its bite punctures the skin, but because its saliva contains a toxic that can cause burns. To refer to a blind mouse as a fearsome creature that brings destruction is, however, severely overstating the animal's power. As such it comically recalls Callimachus heroic portrayal of Molorcus' mice in the *Victoria Berenices* in the third book of the *Aetia*: their approach is compared to that of a lion cub (fr. 54c.11 Harder = *SH* 259 = 177 Pf.), and later on (29) they are called σίνται, an adj. used for lions in Homer (*Il.* 20.165). The portrayal of the shrewmouse by the poet shows an interesting climactic tension, as in this line three attributes qualify the animal; the animal itself is not mentioned until the next line. The first two adjuncts (τυφλήν, σμερδνήν) fill up most of the first hemistich, whereas the third is given more space, and we are only told the creature's name after three preambulary qualifications.

**815 σμερδνήν:** a rare epic adj., synonymous to σμερδαλέος (144, 161, 207, 293, 765); see 144 n. It is not used by other Hellenistic poets, but it is found in early epic (*Il.* 5.742, 15.687 = 732, *h.Sol.* 9), next to a single appearance in tragedy (A. *Pr.* 357). Like the cognate σμερδαλέος the adj. is concerned with sensory perception, either of sight (of the Gorgo's head, of Helios' fearsome gaze, of Typhon's jaws, all awful to look at) or sound (of Ajax' terrible cries). Nic.'s use of the adj. for a shrewmouse here is therefore surely intended as a comic oxymoron, as the tiny blind mouse can hardly be called genuinely fearsome to anyone. The effect is heightened by the similar phrasing of *Il.* 5.742, δεινή τε σμερδνή τε, of the Gorgo's monstrous head, and by the postponement of the animal's name, as in 815 the juxtaposition of qualifications leads up to

the expectation, of a truly monstrous creature; for other instances of such παρὰ προσδοκίαν see notes on 605–606, 634, and 678; see also Introduction 8.4.

**βροτοῖς:** mainly used in poetry. Although synonymous to ἀνήρ and φώς, βροτός is normally used particularly in opposition to ἀθάνατος or θεός. Nic.'s use, here and in 862, perhaps underlines the fragility of man, mortal as he is. If this is the case, the opposition between man and mouse, with its reversal of roles—the fragile man terrified of the mighty mouse—seems especially poignant in a comic context; see Introduction 8.4. Again we are reminded of Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices* (fr. 54c.9–11 Harder = SH 259 = fr. 177 Pf.), where the peasant Molorcus is startled by the scraping of mice at his door "as when a lion cub roars in the distance and the sound, barely heard, reaches the trembling doe's ears" (transl. Nisetich); see previous notes.

**λοιγόν:** see 243 n.

**816 τροχιῇσιν ἐνιθνήσκουσαν ἁμάξης:** a strong contrast with the previous line. The shrewmouse, being not only small but also blind, often gets trapped in deep cart tracks. As it cannot escape, it eventually gets run over by a cart. The shrewmouse may be fearful and bringing destruction to man, its own fragility is brought to the fore immediately afterwards, as the poet debunks the creature's image as pictured in the previous line. The reader, who was only just confronted with fear, is almost asked to pity the sad death of the blind shrewmouse, overrun violently. Moreover, that cart tracks are not only dangerous to mice, but to others as well is suggested in *Ther.* 263 and 371, where Nic. states that certain snakes are often found at ruts in or next to the road, sleeping or warming their bodies in the dry dirt.

On a different level cart tracks could remind the informed reader of the well-trodden path as used in the famous programmatic prologue to the *Aetia* (fr. 1.25–28 Harder). As Callimachus makes perfectly clear, there is no future for those following in the tracks of others. Interestingly, Nic.'s mice find their end in the same tracks. And just as the mighty mice in the *Aetia* are overcome by Molorcus clever invention of the mousetrap (fr. 54c Harder = SH 259 = 117 Pf.), Nic.'s feared shrewmouse too is a helpless victim in the world of human inventions, a remarkable deviation from the general sense of danger in the *Theriaca*.

**817 σῆπα:** a different animal, probably a snake, known under the name of *seps* had already been mentioned in 147; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 187. The σήψ dis-

cussed here is a lizard (as is clear from πεδανοῖσιν ὁμὴν σαύροισιν), and according to Σ *Ther.* 817 it is also known as a *chalcis*, owing to the bronze-coloured stripes on its back.

**πεδανοῖσιν:** see 226 n.

**818 σαλαμάνδρειον δόλιον δάκος:** instead of calling the animal by its normal name (σαλαμάνδρα), Nic. gives a poetic periphrasis. The triple δ-alliteration complements the subsequent double alliteration of the α. As in 815 (σμερδνήν) the animal is portrayed as being deceitful, i.e. as showing both a human quality, and having a malicious mind; see Introduction 8.1.

**δάκος:** see 115 n.

**819–820 ἥ τε καί … | … ἀνώδυνος:** the ancient belief that salamanders are impervious to fire (or could even put out fires) is found in e.g. Arist. *HA* 552b16–17, Thphr. *Ign.* 60, [Antig.] *Mir.* 84b Musso, and Ael. *NA* 2.31. Nic. refers to the same belief in *Al.* 538–539, σαλαμάνδρην | … τὴν οὐδὲ πυρὸς λωβήσατο λιγνύς.

**820 ἄκμηνος:** Gow & Scholfield print ἀκμήνης between daggers. Both Jacques and Spatafora have ἄκμητος, an alternative ms reading. I prefer ἄκμηνος (transmitted in the mss as well, and the only variant mentioned in Σ *Ther.* 820), but all of the *lectiones* are based on the privative of κάμνω ('unwearied, unharmed'), expressing the same idea. My preference for ἄκμηνος is based on its earlier occurrence in 116 ('fasting'), thus following the poet's preference for learned homonyms; cf. ἀκήριος ('unharmed' in 190, 'harmless' in 771), ἀσκελής ('evenly' in 42, 'incessantly' in 278).

### 822–836 Moray Eel, Sting-Ray, Sea-Snake

The last category of animals to be treated comprises several poisonous sea-animals. These are not merely discussed as dangerous per se, but from the perspective of hazardous encounters with humans. Not surprisingly, we are thus informed about the threat they pose to unwary fishermen who are confronted by such dangers out at sea. That immediate treatment for those in peril is not likely to be available, particularly when Nic.'s instructions are to be followed, does not seem to concern the poet. As such this passage seems to serve other purposes, viz. emphasis on the wide knowledge of the poet (822, 829), the depiction of a pitiful yet comic scene from daily life (823–825, fishermen falling overboard, scared by the jumping moray eel), a *paradoxon* (826–827, moray eels

mating with vipers), a playful metaphor (827), depiction of toiling labourers at sea (823, 830), personification of a plant (832), and learned mythology (835–836, the death of Odysseus), including another *paradoxon* (trees die when affected by the poison of the stingray). Moreover, after earlier references to woods, fields, mountains, meadows, hills, rivers, and the like, the natural world painted by the poet in the *Theriaca* is now completed with the sea.

822 **ναὶ μήν**: see 51 n. and Introduction 5.7.

**ὅσα πόντος … ἑλίσσει**: an interesting projection. The sea, being the subject here, is not merely portrayed as the habitat of sea creatures, but as an independent entity that harbours all kinds of sea-monsters. Not only do the individual creatures turn out to be dangerous, but the sea itself needs to be watched with caution: neither the mainland, nor the sea is a safe place.

**ῥόχθοισιν**: a favourite of Lycophron (402, 696, 742), who coined the noun, based on the Homeric verb ῥοχθέω, 'to dash with a roaring sound' (e.g. *Od.* 5.402). In Lycophron it is always associated with the sea, which is imitated by Nic., here and in *Al.* 390, both times to introduce sea-monsters.

823 **σμυραίνην δ' ἔκπαγλον**: 'the horrible moray eel', often found as μύραινα, has a scary appearance indeed, although its bite, nasty as it may be, is not poisonous in all species. This is in fact in accordance with the words of the poet, as he only speaks of the panic of fishermen when confronted with the force of the large creature, but not of its bite. Despite its frigthening reputation, the moray eel was in fact quite popular as an expensive delicacy, as is clear from its appearance in catalogues of food and comedy; cf. Olson & Sens 1999, 114. See further Thompson 1947, 162–165.

**μογεροὺς ἁλιῆας**: this is the third appearance of fishermen in the poem, cf. ἀσπαλιῆες (703) and ἰχθυβολῆες (793); for the portrayal of fishermen as a vista to everyday life see Introduction 8.2. The poetic adj. adds to the overall effect of the setting, contrasting the fierce and dangerous eel to the tired and feeble fishermen. A similar depiction is found in Opp. *H.* 1.35–55, especially 47–49, where the fisherman is portrayed as vulnerable against the deep unknown full of sea-monsters.

824 **πολλάκις … ἐπάκτρου**: the action of this line—the moray eel jumping up and throwing the fishermen overboard—is underlined by the aural firework of alliterations, with recurring consonants (π, ρ, κ/ξ), and the *parechesis* of -πρη-.

**ἐμπρήσασα:** literally the moray eel is said to have 'put the fishermen on fire'. This, of course, is only a metaphor, but of what exactly? According to Σ *Ther.* 824 the moray eel bites the fishermen as it jumps out of the fish-box, in which case the verb may refer to some kind of immediate fever coming over the victims; cf., however, the alternative ms reading ἐμβρύξασα, found in Athenaeus and favoured by Touwaide (1998, 173), and Spatafora's (2007a, 86) suggestion ἐμπρίσασα, which give us an actual bite. Jacques (2002, 64) takes μογεροὺς ἁλιῆας as object of κατεπρήνιξεν, and applies ἐμπρήσασα only to the moray eel itself, which is said to burn with rage ('enflammée de colère'). But we may as well assume that ἐμπίμπρημι means 'to kindle fear' here. In that case the fishermen are startled by the unexpected coming on of the moray eel, which is how Gow & Scholfield interpret the verb. For an elaborate discussion of the variant readings see Spatafora 2007a, 179.

**κατεπρήνιξεν:** perhaps the lengthened καταπρηνίζω was coined to improve upon the older (but still rare) καταπρηνόω (Leon. Tarent. *AP* 7.652 = *HE* 2042). Apart from later imitations in Nonnus the only other occurrence of καταπρήνιζω is a Greek epigram found in Rome (*IGUR* 1342.3), which is probably later than Nic.

**ἐπάκτρου:** perhaps synonymous to ἐπακτρίς, 'light vessel'. But Nic.'s choice, a *hapax legomenon*, may be playing on ἐπακτήρ ('hunter', 'fisherman') as well. If this is the case the scene of the moray eel scaring away the fishermen becomes the more salient, as the hunters become prey themselves in a comical reversal of roles; see Introduction 8.4.

**825** **ἐχετλίου:** only here, perhaps referring to the 'hold' of a ship (Σ *Ther.* 825c ἐποχῆς), but a fish box (probably some kind of wicker basket) makes better sense; cf. Jacques' 'vivier' (2002, 65). The same scholion gives διὰ τοῦ βόλου, either referring to the drawing of a net (cf. Theoc. 1.40) or to the net itself (cf. Herod. 7.75, Ael. *NA* 8.3), suggesting that the moray eel immediately jumps out of the net, probably before it reaches the ship's hold.

**826** Gow & Scholfield, following Schneider, suspect a lacuna between 825 and 826. Neither the mss, nor Athenaeus' quotation of *Ther.* 823–827 (7.312d) suggest, however, that the text here is incomplete. Jacques (2002, 65) admits that Nic.'s train of thought here is incoherent, but not problematic, considering the poet's elliptic style elsewhere. The problem here is that the detail about the moray eel scaring the fishermen is unrelated to the subsequent *paradoxon* that moray eels are wont to leave the sea in order to find a viper to mate with. Nic.'s elliptic narrative style elsewhere (e.g. 343–358) makes such a tran-

sition less problematic and Jacques is right in discarding the lacuna, as it is not strictly necessary. However, I do not follow Jacques' suggestion that Nic. is merely elliptic. What Nic. is trying to say is not just handicapped by brevity. The poet wants to bring in an interesting *paradoxon*, showing his knowledge of anecdotes about his subject matter. This piece of information, interesting as it is—particularly as it comprises snakes—just does not suit the context. It is a strained addition, included because of the poet's zeal to admit all things interesting, even if this hampers the logical development of the poem.

**εἰ ἔτυμον:** for the effect of this and similar combinations see 309 n. and Introduction 8.2.

826–827 **σὺν οὐλοβόροις ἐχίεσσι | θόρνυσθαι:** the adj. οὐλοβόρος, probably a coinage, is only found here. Although from a human perspective it makes good sense in itself ('with deadly bite'), the root -βορ- literally refers to eating, not just biting. Nic. may therefore have had 133–134 in mind, where baby vipers are said to eat through their mother's body, taking revenge for the brutal death of their father. For the female viper at least, the ἔχεις are οὐλοβόροι ('eating destructively') indeed. The fantastic idea that moray eels mate with vipers is found in other sources as well, although all of them are later; Ael. *NA* 1.50, 9.66, Opp. *H.* 1.554–573, Plin. *Nat.* 9.76, 27.14. Aelian even states that the moray eel answers to the viper's call (ἐκεῖνος συρίσας τὴν ἐρωμένην παρακαλεῖ); Thompson 1947, 163. The idea is, however, rejected by Athenaeus (7.312e), and Σ *Ther.* 823, citing the third century BCE physician Andreas. It is striking that the viper is once again mentioned in relation to odd stories about mating, as in 130–131 when the poet tells us that the female bites off the male's head after they have mated. Of no other animal discussed in the *Theriaca* do we hear of such peculiar mating habits. As such stories seem to be primarily concerned with the viper, it can be suggested that ἔχις was not commonly considered to be a particular species of snake, viz. a viper, but was used as a more general designation, similar to ὄφις; cf. Σ *Ther.* 826b, where ἐχίεσσιν is explained as τοῖς ὄφεσιν. For the relation between the *Theriaca* and the paradoxographical tradition see Introduction 8.6.

827 **ἁλὸς νομόν:** the metaphor of the sea as a place of pasturage, or more general dwelling-place, is not original, although it is rare, cf. Archil. 122.7–8 *IEG*$^2$, νομόν | ἐνάλιον. It is striking that the context of this fragment describes the world upside down as a result of an eclipse, with wild (land) animals taking to the sea and changing places with dolphins, which in turn take to the wooded mountains. A similar setting is given by Herodotus (5.92α), where

radical political change is considered to turn the universe around, with men having their νομός in the sea, and fish living on land (καὶ ἄνθρωποι νομὸν ἐν θαλάσσῃ ἕξουσι καὶ ἰχθύες τὸν πρότερον ἄνθρωποι). Interestingly, Nic. uses the word νομός for the sea in a similar context where a new sort of reversal takes place, as the moray eel leaves the sea (προλιποῦσαν ἁλὸς νομόν) to go to land in order to mate with the viper. This reversal of roles is the more poignant in a context of fishermen: the moray eel leaves the sea for the shore, whereas the fishermen do the opposite, falling into the sea out of fear for the moray eel. See also 824 n. on ἐπάκτρου. For poetic reversal in the *Theriaca* cf. notes on 81, 476, 700–714, 815.

**828 τρυγόνα μήν … δράκοντα:** another chiasmus, in which the two hemistichs act as mirrors: the three-syllable animals τρυγόνα ('sting-ray') and δράκοντα, encasing the line, are balanced by the two four-syllable adj.'s in between; one-syllable particles divide adj. and noun on both sides of the caesura. The treatment of dangerous and fearful animals does not distract the poet from aesthetic concerns. For the τρυγών as a sting-ray (not a turtle-dove) see Thompson 1947, 270–271.

**ἁλιρραίστην:** only here. According to Σ *Ther.* 828 the adj. serves to distinguish the sea-dragon or sea-snake (known today as the 'great weever') from the dragon found on the mainland, which is treated in 438–447.

**829 οἶδ':** cf. 805, 811, 822. The poet's repeated claim of competence becomes even more significant in this line, as nothing further is said about the sea dragon in the previous line. From the poet's point of view the possession of knowledge has become ever more central, and the teacher has, at least for a moment, lost sight of his pupil altogether. See also Introduction 5.10.

**830–831 ἦμος … | … τύψῃσιν:** see 23–25 n.

**830 ἐν ὁλκαίοισι λίνοις:** both Gow & Scholfield (1953, 83) and Jacques (2002, 65) connect the adverbial adjunct with the toiling fisherman, "labouring at his hauled drag-nets"; cf. "le travailleur de la mer qui peine à ses traînants filets". But there is good reason to connect the phrase with the sting-ray itself, striking the fisherman as it is trapped in the drag-nets; cf. Touwaide (1997, 194) for a similar approach.

**μεμογήοτα … | ἐργοπόνον:** once again we see an ordinary hard-working labourer depicted as a victim of nature's dangers; see Introduction 8.2. Chryssafis (1981,

60) points at the similarity of ἐργοπόνος (first found here and in fr. 74.54 G-S) and πολύεργος in 4. Not only do both adj.'s, virtually synonyms, seem to be coined for the occasion, but they both serve to underline the toiling nature of common labourers.

831–832 **ἢ ἐν πρέμνοισι … | δενδρείου:** a curious addition, stating that the poison of the sting-ray is not only dangerous to men, but also pernicious to trees. This remark is probably based on the use of the sting-ray's venom to produce poisoned arrows or javelins, or perhaps the sting itself, which has the shape of an arrow. Inevitably such poisoned arrowheads or spearheads get stuck in the barks of trees at some point in battle, after which the poison's destructive power can be observed. As a curious addition it is another clear example of Nic.'s interest in *paradoxa*; cf. Introduction 8.6.

832 **δενδρείου:** a late epic lengthening, varying on the Homeric δένδρεον. It is previously only found in Arat. 1008 (δενδρείοιο), which may be where Nic. picked it up.

**τό τε πολλὸν ἀγαυρότατον θαλέθῃσι:** another instance of the personification of a plant. Just as in 60–62 mint is said to delight in water, or in 661 a thistle takes pride in its leaves, the undefined tree in question here is said to flourish proudly, showing a human emotion. For such anthropomorphisms in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 8.1.

834–835 **ῥίζαι … | … μινύθουσι:** although the effect of the sting-ray's poisonous barb on a tree is in itself not related to the effects on a man, the order chosen by the poet climactically foreshadows the fate of a human victim. Just as the roots and leaves of a tree wither away (ἀποφθίνει), so a man's flesh rots and goes to waste (μινύθουσι), resulting in a horrible death. The belief in the enormous impact of poison on wood is illustrated by Aelian's less than plausible observation in *NA* 2.5. There he states that if a man has a stick in his hand, and a poisonous *basilisk* bites it, the owner of the rod dies; cf. *NA* 16.19.

835 **πυθόμεναι μινύθουσι:** the rare collocation of the two verbs is reminiscent of *Od.* 12.45–46, πολὺς δ' ἀμφ' ὀστεόφιν θίς | ἀνδρῶν πυθομένων, περὶ δὲ ῥινοὶ μινύθουσι. Here Homer describes the sight of the Sirens, sitting next to a heap of bones of rotting men with shrivelling skins. Intertextually not only the verbs are similar, but the two settings show a similar context too: both an encounter with the Sirens and one with a sting-ray have the same effect, viz. death by putrefaction. Both are encountered at sea, and in both cases precautions need

to be taken to prevent a certain death. In the case of the Sirens Odysseus learns his comrades how to prevent certain death (12.48 ff.); in the *Theriaca* Nic. gives us precautions of a different nature, but the result is the same. The intertextual reference is the more salient as Odysseus outsmarts the Sirens, but is eventually subdued by the sting-ray: within the universe of the *Theriaca* the only knowledge that is really useful is of the sort Nic. has to offer; see Introduction 7.3.

**λόγος:** this is the only instance in the poem where mention is made of a λόγος, whereas in 343 μῦθος is used. Although λόγος merely serves to call a certain story to mind here, its use in e.g. Arat. 100 shows that it can be used in the exact same way as μῦθος. As Stinton (1976, 65) points out, terms like λόγος frequently introduce mythical exempla in order to invoke the authority of tradition. The story in question, viz. the death of Odysseus (see below), illustrates how poisonous the sting-ray's barb is, but it has in fact little to do with the danger of encountering sting-rays at sea. The poet has created an opportunity to introduce a myth that appears to be apt, but at the same time serves as a learned diversion.

**ποτ':** for this use of ποτέ, introducing a myth of old, see 439 n. and Introduction 8.3.

**835–836 Ὀδυσσεύς | ἔφθιτο:** the story of the death of Odysseus was treated in the *Telegony*, the last poem of the *Epic Cycle* and a sequel to Homer's *Odyssey*. Telegonus, Odysseus' son by Circe, sails to Ithaca to ravage the island. In defending his property Odysseus is killed in ignorance by Telegonus' spear, which has the barb of a sting-ray for a spearhead; cf. Lyc. 795–796, Parth. 3.3 (on which see Lightfoot 1999, 390), and Opp. *H.* 2.497–505. Odysseus' death appears to be alluded to, albeit in a veiled manner, in *Od.* 11.134–135, where in the underworld Teiresias prophesies that for Odysseus death will come ἐξ ἁλός. This has been interpreted as 'from (out of) the sea', but modern commentators consider the phrase to mean 'away from the sea', i.e. on dry land, at home; see Heubeck 1989, 86. It cannot, however, be ruled out that the former interpretation was noticed in antiquity as well. This idea may well have been at the basis of Nic.'s literal interpretation of the sting-ray's barb as an instrument of death originating from the sea.

Gow & Scholfield (1953, 188) point at an interesting alternative version known from Aeschylus. In fr. 275 *TrGF*, from the play *Psychagogoi*, we hear Teiresias revealing his prophecy to Odysseus. He foresees that a heron, flying over, will release a load of droppings on him, containing the *acantha* of a sea ani-

mal, which will cause Odysseus' body to rot from the lethal poisoning, ἐρωδιὸς γὰρ ὑψόθεν ποτώμενος | ὄνθῳ σε πλήξει νηδύος χαλώμασιν· | ἐκ τοῦδ' ἄκανθα ποντίου βοσκήματος | σήψει παλαιὸν δέρμα καὶ τριχορρυές. Although neither the sting-ray nor its barb are mentioned literally, Aeschylus' off-beat version resembles the *Telegony* at least as regards the sting; cf. Gantz 1993, 711–712. This strange story may have been confirmed by Sophocles' lost play *Odysseus Acanthoplex*, but the divergent meanings of ἄκανθα ('anything thorny') are inconclusive about the presence or absence of a sting-ray's barb; on Odysseus' death see also Schade 1999, 192–199, and Lightfoot 1999, 386. For all different versions of Odysseus' end see Hartmann 1917.

**836 λευγαλέοιο … κέντρου:** Gow & Scholfield translate "how Odysseus perished from the baneful sting of this monster from the sea." It should be noted, however, that no reference is made to the sting-ray in particular. As the text only tells us Odysseus was hit by a baneful sting from the sea, it can be suggested that Nic. intentionally allows for both versions of the story (see previous note), viz. τυπείς as being hit from the front or from above, and κέντρου, either for a ray's barb, or for the ἄκανθα mentioned by Aeschylus, i.e. a different sort of sting. If the poet has such a consideration in mind here, his phrasing serves to obscure the fact that the introduction of Odysseus here is in fact hardly relevant for the discussion of the sting-ray.

The adj., only used twice in the *Ther.* (see 167 n.) is in Homer virtually only used by secondary narrators, i.e. not expressing the objective observations of the primary narrator, but the subjective opinions of narrators in embedded narratives. If this is indicative of how ancient followers of Homer perceived his use of the adj., then Nic.'s use of λευγαλέος here could point at a more personal perception of the story told here.

### 837–956 Part 2*b*: Remedies II

After the discussion of the various other poisonous animals in part 2*a* (715–836), the fourth major part of the poem will comprise various (herbal) recipes and treatments, ostensibly to counter attacks by the animals treated in 715–836. The core of the poem (157–956) thus shows a clear division into two halves, each of which contains two parts. Although the two parts are thematically strictly distinct, the transition from 2*a* to 2*b* is hardly noticable. In a single line the poet tells us he will proceed with remedies, after which the reader is immediately plunged into a dense enumeration of plants. The enumeration itself falls into three main sections: individual recipes for different cures (838–914),

treatment of the wound itself (915–933), and a general remedy (934–956) which is presented as an elaborate compound cure for any poisonous affliction. The individual recipes, however, turn out to be little more than a long list of herbs and roots, as the poet usually fails to present details concerning quantities or preparation; see Gow & Scholfield 1953, 188.

837 INTRODUCTORY TRANSITION

838–933 INDIVIDUAL RECIPES[18]

838–847 Alkanet, potentilla, bramble-flowers, burdock, sorrel, viper's herb, cicamum, hartwort, ground-pine, oak's bark, hedge-parsley, carrot seeds, terebinth-berries, orchella, maiden-hair
848–852 Cretan alexanders, dead-nettle's root, root of eryngo, rosemary frankincense, cleavers, helxine, poppy
853–855 Shoot of the fig-tree, fruit of the wild fig
856–859 Firethorn, mullein-blossom, haver-grass, celandine, wild carrot, bryony
860–862 Vervain, rhamnus
863–865 Feverfew, chicory, hart's tongue, ruddle
866–875 Squirting cucumber, paliurus, pomegranate, hyssop, rest-harrow, love-in-absence, grape cluster, garlic, coriander, fleabane
876–878 Pepper, garden-cress, pennyroyal, deadly nightshade, mustard
879–884 Leak, nettle, squill, purse-tassels, edderwort, rhamnus, pine-seed
885–895 Scorpius, waterlilies, pistachio nuts, hedge-parsley, myrtle-berries, sage, fennel, hedge-mustard, wild chick-pea
896–900 Water-cress, melilot, dropwort, corn-cockle, plantain, rose, gillyflower
901–906 Knot-grass, depilatory, hyacinth
907–914 Trefoil, silphium, tufted thyme, samphire, lavender-cotton, anise, Libyan roots

915–933 TREATMENT OF THE WOUND

915–920 General remedy in case of emergency
921–933 Poison draining, cauterising, curative unguent

18 For the sake of clarity I follow Jacques, who presents a much tidier division in paragraphs of part 2*b* than Gow. This division is, however, arbitrary, as it is usually impossible to tell where one recipe ends and where the next one begins.

934–956 GENERAL REMEDY

934–956 Birthwort, iris, spikenard, all-heal, pellitory, wild carrot, black bryony, peony, black hellebore, native sodium carbonate, cummin, fleabane, stavesacre, bay's berries, treed-medick, horse-moss, cyclamen, poppy-juice, seeds of agnus castus, balsam, cassia, cow-parsnip, salt, hare's curd, crab, juice of cleavers

### *837 Introductory Transition*

837 **Οἷσιν:** summing up all dangerous creatures treated in part 2*b* (715–836); see 714 n. Such use of a pronoun to resume a large section of previous information is similar to *Op*. 822, where αἵδε, at line-opening at the end of the section on the days, refers to all the information given by Hesiod on the subject in 765–821.

**ἐγώ … διείσομαι:** within the *Theriaca* both words are used only here and in 493–494. It is no coincidence that the combination is found at the beginning of the second half of both parts. It functions as a marker of the poem's structure, not merely conveying that a large section has ended, and a new one is to commence (viz. on recipes), but particularly emphasising the bipartite structure of the poem; see 493 n. By comparison, in the *Alexipharmaca*, which lacks such a bipartite structure, ἐγώ occurs only once (near the end of the proem in line 9, although merely in contrast with σύ in 6; Schneider 1962, 10), whereas the verb διείσομαι is not used at all. If we are to consider the presence of ἐγώ at two significant places in the poem a relevant marker of structure, than the repeated combination with διείσομαι seems a confirmation of the poet's plan. For the use of first person fut. verbs as structural markers see Introduction 5.10.

**ἄρκια νούσων:** for the use of this manner of phrasing as a metrical variant of e.g. ἀλθεστήρια νούσων (493), imitating Homeric formulae of varying length, see 528 n.

### *838–933 Individual Recipes*

838–847 Alkanet, Potentilla, Bramble-Flowers, Burdock, Sorrel, Viper's Herb, Cicamum, Hartwort, Ground-Pine, Oak's Bark, Hedge-Parsley, Carrot Seeds, Terebinth-Berries, Orchella, Maiden-Hair

After a brief introductory transition in 837 the poet starts off energetically with a single sentence that goes on for ten lines; cf. 21–34 n. The fifteen ingredients enumerated in one long flow are perhaps more effective in impressing

the addressee than in conveying proper information. Speed, created metrically by the use of multiple holodactylic hexameters (five in the first eight lines of 837–847), and by the use of *asyndeton* in 840–841, add to the feeling of a sweeping opening, thus restating the poet's ability as a learned teacher who is able to toss out his teachings with ease. An ostensible *anacolouthon* adds to the idea that the poet is too preocccupied with his learned material to keep the instructions to his pupil in mind. The sentence is finished with a brief but evocative image of the moist leaves of maiden-hair after a rain storm.

838–839 **ὅτ' … | ἄλλοτε … ὅτ'**: see 82 n.

**ἀγχούσης**: 'alkanet'.

838 **θριδακηΐδα … χαίτην**: 'leaves like wild lettuce'. For χαίτη see 65 n. The adj., only found here, is part of Nic.'s poetic diction. The possibilities for poetic originality in listing plants and their appearance are limited, but coinages like these (e.g. ὀριγανόεσσά τε χαίτη in 66, ἀμαρακόεσσα … χαίτη in 503, περιστεροέντα … πέτηλα in 860) add to the desired variation, necessary to capture the reader; see Introduction 6.2.

**λάζεο**: see 108 n.

839 **πενταπέτηλον**: 'potentilla'.

**φοινά**: here probably 'red', as a lexical variant of φοίνισσα (cf. 845), but in 146 the adj. is closer to φονός, 'deadly'; cf. Papadopoulou 2009, 103. Despite the different etymologies of the different adj.'s (φοῖνιξ, 'red' from imported Phoenician dye, φοινός 'red' from the colour of blood, through φονός), here and in 845 they seem to be interchangable, used as poetic alternatives. Σ *Ther.* 839, however, give both πυρρά and μέλαινα, perhaps thinking of the black brambles themselves.

**βάτοιο**: 'bramble'.

840 **ἄρκιον**: 'burdock'. The enjambed *asyndeton*, repeated in the next line (λυκαψόν, | κίκαμα) adds to the speed of the sentence. Several plants are hardly given space as separate entities, e.g. with their own adj.'s and qualifications, but are presented in a condensed way, adding to the flow of the teacher's sweeping presentation.

**ὀξαλίδας:** 'sorrel'.

**ὀρμενόεντα λυκαψόν:** 'long-stalked viper's herb'. For the adj., probably a coinage, see 838 n. and Introduction 6.2.

841 **κίκαμα:** 'cicamum'.

**τόρδειλόν:** 'hartwort'.

**περιβρυές:** see 531 n.

**πίτυν:** 'pine'.

842 **φηγοῦ:** 'oak tree'.

843 **καυκαλίδας:** 'hedge-parsley'.

**σταφυλίνου:** 'carrot'.

844 **τρεμίθοιο:** 'terebinth'. The tree goes by varying orthography (τέρμινθος, τερέβινθος), but τρέμιθος is only found here. According to LSJ it is a poeticism, only found in Nicander, but as τρέμιθος is the common Cyprian name of the tree, eponymously named after the Cyprian village of Tremithus (Hdn. *De prosodia catholica* 3.1.242), Nicander's alternative name is at least not a lexical poeticism.

845 **φοινίσσον:** see 839 n.

**καταβάλλεο:** elsewhere in the poem the verb is used with a certain vessel in which the ingredients need to be thrown (cf. 102 with χύτρῳ in 98, and 581 with κυάθοις in 582). Here such a vessel is absent, although the phrasing (καταβάλλεο with ἐν) is similar. It seems the poet is more concerned here with enumerating the necessary plants than with the proper designation of the vessel needed, which explains the scattered instruction of λάζεο in 838, ἐν in 841 and καταβάλλεο in 845.

**φῦκος:** 'orchella tinctoria', some sort of lichen.

846 **ἀχραές τ' ἀδίαντον:** 'the undefiled maiden-hair'. The plant owes its Greek name (cf. διαίνω, to 'wet', 'moisten') to the fact that drops of rain do not rest on its leaves; cf. Thphr. *HP* 7.14 and Gow 1952b, 239. The adj., an etymological

explanation of the impenetrability of the leaves of the maiden-hair, suggests a relation with virginity (see 16 n.), which is more clearly expressed by the modern nomenclature of the plant.

**ὄμβροιο ῥαγέντος:** for the metaphor of clouds 'breaking' cf. Ar. *Nu.* 378; for thunder see S. fr. 578 *TrGF*, βροντὴ δ' ἐρράγη; Timaeus (*FGrH* 3b, 566, F 41b7, cited in Plb. 12.4d.7) has οὐρανίων ὄμβρων ῥαγέντων, but closer is ἐρράγη ὄμβρος in A.R. 2.1115.

847 **πετάλοισιν ἐφίζει:** the phrasing calls pastoral descriptions of birds to mind, e.g. *Od.* 19.520, Hes. *Op.* 486, *h.Pan.* 17, Ibyc. 317a.1–2 *PMGF*, E. *Ph.* 1516. Here, however, it is not a gentle bird that sits among the leaves, but delicate, pure, rainwater, λεπταλέη ... νοτίς. Despite the meta-poetical association of both the Callimachean λεπταλέη (used for the Muse in fr. 1.24 Harder as part of Callimachus' λεπτός-aesthetic) and νοτίς (moist or dew as the food for cicadas, viz. poets, fr. 1.34 Harder), such an interpretative dimension does not seem to be present here.

848–852 Cretan Alexanders, Dead-Nettle's Root, Root of Eryngo, Rosemary Frankincense, Cleavers, Helxine, Poppy

The poet proceeds with his long string of ingredients, giving us what seems to be the next recipe, but see 26 n. Although few elements help to produce a passage of great literary merit, the poet tries to achieve variation through word order, anaphora, and creative use of adj.'s, probably coined to yield balanced lines: on close inspection dull repetition is virtually absent.

848 **εἰ δέ:** for this combination at line-opening as a typical element of Hesiod's didactic poetry see 57 n.

**σμυρνεῖον:** 'Cretan alexanders'.

**ἀειβρυές:** see 531 n. and Introduction 6.2.

849 **λευκάδος:** 'dead-nettle'.

**ἠρύγγου:** cf. 645.

**ἀθερηίδα:** one of the many plant-related adj.'s coined for the occasion; see Introduction 6.2.

**850 ἄμμιγα:** see 41 n. and Introduction 6.4.

**καχρυφόρῳ:** another adj. coined for the occasion; see 531 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**λιβανωτίδι:** 'frankincense'.

**μηδ' ἀπαρίνη:** 'nor cleavers'. The start of the next instruction after the bucolic diaeresis, following a sense pause here, creates speed. The effect is emphasised by the anaphoric use of μηδ' in the next line.

**851 κουλυβάτεια:** see 589.

**περιβρίθουσα:** according to Kidd (1997, 543) an imitation of Arat. 1049, μὴ μὲν ἅδην ἔκπαγλα περιβρίθοιεν ἁπάντη. Aratus' innovation of the Homeric simple βρίθω is followed three times by Nic. (*Al.* 143, 180), always in its Aratean *sedes*. Here, however, we have a combined reference: the compound verb is borrowed from Aratus, yet the use of βρίθω for a μήκων is taken from *Il.* 8.306–307, where a poppy is said to be heavy with fruit, μήκων …, ἥ τ' ἐνὶ κήπῳ, | καρπῷ βριθομένη; see Introduction 7.3.

**852 χραίσμησιν:** see 583 n.

853–855 Shoot of the Fig-Tree, Fruit of the Wild Fig

Apart from a few stylistic embellishments (alliteration, echo) and a metrical reflection of the contents of 855, this short recipe yields an interesting metaphor, comparing the early fruit of the wild fig to a cuckoo (854). Just as the cuckoo heralds spring before other birds, the fig's fruit is ripe and swollen before the rest of the fruit later in the season.

**853 κράδης κυέουσαν … κορύνην:** the new recipe, marked by a new verb, is emphasised by a triple alliteration.

**ἀποτμήξαιο:** the epic ἀποτμήγω (apart from Homer used in Hes. *Th.* 188, Parm. 4.8 DK, and A.R. 4.1052 and 1120) is of course preferred over the prosaic ἀποτέμνω, here, in 713, and in *Al.* 101 and 309.

**854 κόκκυγας ἐρινάδος:** 'the early fruit of the wild fig-tree'; κόκκυξ ('cuckoo') does not seem to be used elsewhere for fruit. It is ostensibly used methaphorically here, as the cuckoo is associated with seasonal precociousness. It figures as the herald of spring in Hes. *Op.* 486; cf. 380 n. Such metaphor-

ical use, likening a plant to a bird, fits well in a poem on nature, where both animals and plants are likened to men as well. ἐρινάς, a lexical variant of ἐρινεός, is only found here.

855 **γογγύλοι:** 'round'. The adj. is used occasionally as an alternative of στρογγύλος, e.g. Ar. *Pax* 28 or Call. fr. 606 Pf. Here the choice may be due to the similarity of γογγύ- and κόκκυ- in the previous line, with the former echoing the latter.

**ἀνοιδείοντες:** the swollen appearance of the early fruit of the wild fig is reflected in the use of only four long words; for versus tetracoli in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.8.

### 856–859 Fiery Thorn, Mullein-Blossom, Haver-Grass, Celandine, Wild Carrot, Bryony

The next recipe, consisting of little more than names of plants, again has some stylistic refinement: 856–857 show a four-part 'enjambed' alliteration, divided in two by the line-end, 858 gives another *asyndeton* between lines, creating speed. In addition we find again some of the epic vocabulary, a trademark of Nic., used earlier in the poem. The plant bryony provides a brief digression, as it can cause freckles and rash to disappear. The lack of proper amounts, or clear instructions for preparation betrays the poet's preference for scenic depiction, rather than pharmaceutical exactness.

856 **λάζεο:** see 108 n.

**πυράκανθαν:** 'fiery thorn'.

**ἰδέ:** see 616 n.

**φλόμου:** 'mullein'.

857 **ἄμμιγα:** see 41 n. and Introduction 6.2, 6.4, and 6.10.

**αἰγίλοπός:** 'haver-grass'.

**χελιδονίου:** 'celandine'.

858 **δαυκεῖον:** 'wild carrot'. For the effect of *asyndeton* between two lines see 840 n. and Introduction 6.8.

**βρυωνίδος:** 'bryony'.

**859** **ἐχθρήν:** perhaps the spots on the skin are hateful to women merely for aesthetic reasons, but see 858 n. for λεύκην as a skin disease.

860–862 Vervain, Rhamnus

The next recipe shows some of Nic.'s familiar traits, such as heavy compound verbs, *variatio* in alternative phrasing, Homeric and Hesiodic rarities, and the usual high-blown claims about certain death—and how to ward it off.

**860** **περιστεροέντα … πέτηλα:** the adj., from the plant περιστέριον ('vervain'), is only found here; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2 for Nic.'s predilection for coining adj.'s in -(ο)εις. For the periphrastic phrasing ('vervainous leaves' instead of 'leaves of vervain') as an element of Nic.'s poetic diction see 838 n. and 6.2.

**861** **ἀλεξιάρης … ῥάμνου:** the adj. to the plant rhamnus here is elsewhere only attested in Hes. *Op*. 464, in the same *sedes*. Nic.'s use here clearly assumes ἀλεξιάρη to be the proper fem. sg., which must have been his reading of *Op*. 464. See, however, West (1978, 275), who is sure that the correct Greek text in Hesiod should be ἀλεξιάρης. According to West Nic.'s assumption must be based on a false reading of Hesiod, i.e. the same reading transmitted in the mss. In Hesiod the adj. is used for a field that should be laid fallow after it has been sown for a year, in which case ἀρή, 'ruin' is prevented. Nic. takes the adj. more literally and applies it to the herb rhamnus, which is able to ward off death by poisoning for humans. If West's second emendation in *Op*. 464, Ἀιδωνέος κηλήτειρα, is correct—and if this reading was known to Nic.—Nic.'s use of the adj. gains meaning, as the herb of rhamnus is said (intertextually) to be an 'enchantress of Hades' too. At the same time Nic. seems to be playing on Euphorion here (*CA* 137, p. 53 = 138 Van Groningen = Σ *Ther*. 860a = 134 Lightfoot), who mentions the curative qualities of rhamnus as well, ἀλεξίκακον φύε ῥάμνον; see Magnelli 2006, 191–192 and Introduction 6.5.

**πτόρθους:** πτόρθος is a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Od*. 6.128 (same *sedes*), but its use in *Op*. 421 and subsequent poets does not qualify it as very rare. Nic.'s use of the verb shows some interesting similarities to the Homeric context, which describes how the naked, shipwrecked Odysseus brakes off a branch to cover his private parts. In Nic.'s context πτόρθοι need to be broken off as well, in order to prepare a recipe that will stave off death. Different though the passages may be, in both cases the same noun is used for a branch that needs to be broken off in order to succeed in surviving.

**ἀπαμεργέο:** a compound only used by Nic., here and in *Al.* 306. This is by no means the only instance of the use of rare and weighty compound verbs to add colour to the somewhat drab enumerations of plants, e.g. καтασμώξαιο (860, cf. *Al.* 332), ἀποτμήξαιο (853, see n.), περιβρίθουσά (851), ἐμβρίθουσαν (867), ἐνερεύθεται (871).

**862 δρήστειρα:** modern editors are divided between the mss readings δρήστειρα (Gow & Scholfield) and νήστειρα (Jacques, Spatafora); both are in Σ *Ther.* 862. The latter reading makes good sense as regards contents, 'when taken fasting, this (plant) by itself will stave off death for men'; for the impact of both poison and cure in sobriety cf. 116 n. Grammatically it is, however, awkward, because it looks as if the plant needs to be sober itself. The former reading, δρήστειρα ('house servant'), occurs twice in Homer (*Od.* 10.349, 19.345), in the formula αἵ οἱ/τοι δῶμα κάτα δρήστειραι ἔασι(ν). The only other instance before Nic. is an imitation (although in a new context) in A.R. 3.700, which underlines the noun's status as a Homeric rarity, of interest to Hellenistic poets. Not only in that capacity δρήστειρα makes sense here, but also as regards contents, portraying the plant anthropomorphically as a servant, ready to suit the needs of one who employs its services; see Introduction 8.1.

**βροτῶν:** the use of βροτός instead of φώς or ἀνήρ here, i.e. in close opposition to death (κῆρας), is common; see 815 n. The internal addressee is no longer in view, as the teacher only talks about the use of the root of rhamnus for men in general, not for the general second person you, or for a particular victim he may come across. For shifts of address see Introduction 4.1 and 4.4.

**ἀπὸ κῆρας ἐρύκει:** see 699 n.

### 863–865 Feverfew, Chicory, Hart's Tongue, Ruddle

The next recipe, again very brief, shows the poet's devices for adding speed to his account.

**863 ναὶ μήν:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.6.

**παρθενίοιο:** 'feverfew'.

**864 κίχορον … μίλτου:** several devices add to the rapid flow of information transmitted here: a sense of speed created by the asyndetic coordination to the

previous line (cf. 840 n.), a holodactylic rhythm, the mention of three different ingredients (chicory, hart's tongue, ruddle), and the start of a new part of the sentence after the bucolic diaeresis, anticipating the next line through the prospective enjambment; cf. 721 n. and Introduction 6.8.

**μίλτου:** not a flower, but red earth, red ochre or ruddle; Gow 1951, 104.

**865 θελκτήριον:** normally referring to charms or spells (e.g. adjectivally in A.R. 3.738), but used here as someting soothing, without any connotation of magic. It is not a word commonly used for medical alleviation, although in *Ch.* 670 Aeschylus calls a bed θελκτηρία for fatigue. The adj. θελκτήριος is sometimes used metaphorically, e.g. of healing words (A. *Supp.* 447), or words that can 'cure' love (E. *Hipp.* 478). The similarity in phrasing of πασῇσι πέλει θελκτήριον ἄτης here, to οὐλομένῃσιν ἀλεξητήριον ἄτης (*Ther.* 100), and πάσῃσιν ἀλεξητήριον ἄταις (*Ther.* 934)—all at line-end—suggests that Nic. is using θελκτήριον as a suitable synonym here, and not only as an innovative turn of phrase.

### 866–875 Squirting Cucumber, Paliurus, Pomegranate, Hyssop, Rest-Harrow, Love-In-Absence, Grape Cluster, Garlic, Coriander, Fleabane

This next recipe continues in the same vein as the previous ones. Apart from an occasional addition, coinage, or description of a plant's appearance, the ingredients are summed up rather dryly. The poet's intention to impress his reader with his vast knowledge is not always matched with an eye for exciting details, and despite being well-accomplished in verse composition, he does not always succeed in painting pictures of nature in words. Towards the end of the poem the poet's poetical creativity appears to be waning somewhat.

**866 δήποτε:** see 683 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**σικύοιο:** 'squirting cucumber'.

**867 ἐμβρίθουσαν:** see 861 n.

**868 εὐρρήχου:** one of the many plant-related adj.'s coined for the occasion; see Introduction 6.2.

**παλιούρου:** 'paliurus'.

**869–870 νεαλεῖς τ' ὀρόβακχοι | σίδης ὑσγινόεντας ἐπημύοντες ὀλόσχους:** 'and fresh fruits | of the pomegranate, bending down as regards their scarlet pedicles'. Gow & Scholfield's text reads σίδης ὑσγινόεντος ἐπιμύοντας ὀλόσχους, and it is difficult to decide whether Jacques' text is better than Gow & Scholfield's with regard to contents, but at least Jacques' choice yields better Greek.

**872 ἄλλοτε:** see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**ὕσσωπός:** 'hyssop'.

**πολύγουνος:** see 59 n. The adj. bears close resemblance to πουλύγονος (used in 901), but is a poeticism, varying on πολυγόνατος, 'many-jointed', of ὄνωνις, 'rest-harrow'.

**ὄνωνις:** 'rest-harrow'.

**873 Τηλεφίοιο:** another eponymous plant (cf. 501, 541, 627, 666, 685, 902), this time referring to the herb with which Telephus was cured after being wounded in the thigh by Achilles. The more widespread story was that Telephus, who could only be cured by the one who caused his wound, was healed by means of scrapings of the rust of Achilles' copper spearhead, as the spear was literally the giver of the wound; see *Cypr.* arg. *PEG*, Prop. 2.1.63–64, Ov. *Pont.* 2.2.26, Plin. *Nat.* 34.152. The alternative presented here is, however, also found in Pliny (*Nat.* 25.42), who tells us Achilles discovered the curative plant, incidentally showing the same serendipity as his teacher Cheiron (cf. 500–508). Pliny, however, tells us the plant was eponymously called Ἀχίλλειος, not Τηλέφιος, although others call it *panacem Heracliam* (πάνακες Ἡράκλειον).

Alternatively, the ms reading adopted by Gow & Scholfield, τηλεφίλοιο, makes good sense too, the τηλέφιλον ('love-in-absence') being a plant known from Theoc. 3.29 and the late Agath. *AP* 5.295. But apart from the lack of a welcome—though arguable—reference to the mythical Telephus, the τηλέφιλον is not known for its curative properties, as Jacques (2002, 246) points out; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 189.

**βότρυσι:** 'grape cluster'.

**874 ἀγλῖθες:** see 840 n.

**ὀρειγενέος:** 'born in the mountains'. Only here, and probably a coinage, but compound adj.'s formed with the productive suffix -γενής are not uncommon

in Greek, particularly when designating origin (e.g. ὑλογενής, γηγενής); see 601 n. and Introduction 6.4.

**κορίοιο**: 'coriander'.

875 **λεπτοθρίοιο πολύχνοα**: two coinages, the first aptly describing the tender petals of the fleabane, the second its downy leaves. Obviously, φύλλα κονύζης would have sufficed to point out the proper ingredient, yet the combined coinages, as usual consisting of compound adj.'s, add some sophistication to the otherwise dull description of the plants in this section; see Introduction 6.2.

**κονύζης**: 'fleabane'.

876–878 Pepper, Garden-Cress, Pennyroyal, Deadly Nightshade, Mustard

This recipe contains a nice innovation of a Homeric part., serving to underline once again the horror one can encounter out in the open, and stressing how useful proper knowledge of curative herbs is when one is in an evil plight.

876 **πέπεριν**: 'pepper'.

876–877 **ἢ ἀπὸ Μήδων | κάρδαμον**: 'garden-cress', of Persian origin, as related by Xenophon (*Cyr.* 1.2.8), who tells us that among the Persians it is eaten by schoolboys who bring it from home to school. Whether or not it was readily available outside of Persia is unclear, but Nic. at least implies that it can be picked easily.

877 **ἐμπίσαιο**: see 624 n. and Introduction 6.10.

**πολυάνθεα**: the use of a fem. adj. here, where we would expect πολυάνθης, is an original poeticism. For similar formations, using new or rare fem. endings, cf. θουράς (131), παυράς (210), κιρράς (519); see Introduction 6.2.

**γλήχω**: 'pennyroyal'.

878 **στρύχνον**: 'deadly nightshade'.

**σίνηπι**: 'mustard'.

**κακηπελέοντα:** a Nicandrean neo-epic invention, used here and in *Al.* 93, and imitated in Opp. *H.* 5.546 (κακηπελέων, same *sedes*). The coinage plays on the rare Homeric part. ὀλιγηπελέων, found in the same *sedes* in *Od.* 19.356 (of Penelope's old servant Eurycleia, weak with age), and earlier in the line in *Il.* 15.24, 245 and *Od.* 5.457. Whereas Homer uses the part. to qualify those of feeble power, Nic. caps his predecessor by applying the new verb to those who are in an evil plight, either from animal poisoning, or from lead, as in *Al.* 93. For such intertextual play in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 7.3.

879–884 Leek, Nettle, Squill, Purse-Tassels, Edderwort, Rhamnus, Pine-Seed

The next recipe yields several details of interest: a comical exaggeration of a high-flown adj. to qualify petty problems, a small but effective vista to everyday life, picturing boys playing pranks with a stinging nettle, metaphoric use of a Homeric word for a plant's shell, an offhand etymological connection, adj.'s coined for the occasion and a poetic periphrasis of pine-seed.

**879** **ἄγρει:** see 534 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**πρασιῆς:** this is the second time we hear about taking ingredients from a (kitchen) garden (cf. 576), instead of gathering them out in the open, when one is poisoned away from home. From the start of the poem the impression was given that the teacher's instructions were aimed at picking the necessary herbs from fields or water-meadows. Leeks, however, are probably considered to be more readily available at home; of course the use of πρασιή at the same time occasions a nice *figura etymologica* with πράσον. Jacques emends the sg. to πρασιῇς, based on Nic.'s use of the plur. elsewhere (576, *Al.* 532, frr. 70.5, 85.2), but retaining the gen. from the mss makes good sense when taken with ἄγρει; cf. Smyth § 1395.

**ἄλλοτε:** see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**880** **σπέρμ' ὀλοὸν κνίδης:** *hypallage*, as it is not the seed of the nettle that causes irritation, but its stinging hairs; cf. Jacques 2002, 96. To qualify the stinging nettle as ὀλοός, 'destructive', particularly in a poem dealing with gruesome death by poisoning, is clearly a comical exaggeration; see Introduction 8.4. Nasty as the sting of the nettle may be, it is merely hurtful, and does not deserve the qualification ὀλοός, as in Nic.'s world the latter implies grave danger (cf. οὖλος, 233). Such use of grave words for not so grave inflictions underlines the contrast between the 'real' (if exaggerated) world painted in the *Theriaca*, and

the romantic bucolic world of Theocritus' poetry, where pain is absent, or at least less present (as in e.g. Theoc. 4.50); for Nic.'s contrastive play with the romantic world of bucolic poetry see Introduction 8.2 and Overduin 2014. Alternatively ὀλοόν could be taken as a variant of ὅλος or the Ionic οὖλος, in which case Nic. is merely referring to the 'whole seed of the nettle', as is suggested by Σ *Ther.* 880b, ὁλόκληρον. Jacques (2002, 69) rightly considers the scholiast's explanation as a feeble attempt to explain for the odd adj. here, as we would expect the epic-Ionic adj. οὖλος if Nic. was really thinking of the whole seed; for similar interpretative problems see 233 n.

**ἥ θ' ἑψίη ἔπλετο κούροις:** the innocent nature of the stings of the nettle (see previous n.) is exemplified by the poet himself, who observes that it is a plaything for boys. A similar observation, captured in a similar relative clause, is made in fr. 75 G-S of Nic.'s *Georgica*, where the mulberry is said to be a plaything for young kids, καὶ μορέης, ἣ παισὶ πέλει μείλιγμα νέοισι. The noun ἑψία (here in its epic-Ionic form) is very rare, the only previous occurrence being Sophocles fr. 3 *TrGF*, unfortunately without any context. The verb ἑψιάομαι, however, is slightly less rare, being a Homeric *dis legomenon* at *Od.* 17.530 and 21.429, next to three instances of compounds. As a rarity it is imitated by Callimachus, *Dian.* 3, *Cer.* 38, and Apollonius, 1.459, and 3.118, … ἀμφ' ἀστραγάλοισι δὲ τώγε | χρυσείοις, ἅ τε κοῦροι ὁμήθεες, ἑψιόωντο; see Campbell 1994, 109. It is not unlikely, considering the rarity of the combination, that Nic. is thinking of latter instance, as Apollonius is describing a game of knucklebones played by Eros and Ganymedes, who are described as κοῦροι, and who are said to indulge in games typical (ὁμήθεες) of boys. Likewise Nic. tells us that the stinging nettle is typically a plant with which boys play tricks on each other. Again the epic world of gods and heroes is transferred to everyday life in the real world. Brief as the poet's addition here may be, this hemistich offers another vista to daily life, creating a welcome break in a rather dull listing of ingredients. For Nic.'s use of such vistas see Introduction 8.2.

881 **νιφόεν:** see 291 n.

**σκίλλης:** 'squill'.

882 **σπείρεα:** 'coats' of purse tassels (βολβῶν), a metaphoric Homerism, although of a heteroclite nature, as this is the only instance of the neut. σπεῖρος, next to the regul plur. σπεῖρα (*Od.* 4.245). The apparent—and existent—relation to σπέρμ' in 880, in the same *sedes*, is probably not a coincidence, this being one of Nic.'s instances of a *figura etymologica*; see Introduction 6.6.

**καυλεῖον:** see 75 n.

**ὁμοκλήτοιο:** only here, apparently as a variant of the equally rare ἰσώνυμος in 678. Just like ἰσώνυμος, the coined adj. serves to mark the etymological connection between the plant δρακόντιον (Σ *Ther.* 882bc) and the δράκων as a species of snake, even though the etymological explanation itself is lacking; for similar etymological play in the *Theriaca* see Introduction 6.6.

**δράκοντος:** the dragon-plant (δρακόντιον, δρακοντία) is named after the snake (for 'dragon' meaning snake rather than dragon see 438–447 n.) as it was believed to be a prophylactic against snakes; Strömberg 1940, 38.

883 **ῥάμνου:** 'rhamnus'.

**θαμνίτιδος:** 'shrubby', only here. Cf. similar coinages used to elevate ordinary plant terms to poetical diction, such as περιβρυές (841), ἀειβρυές (848), ἀθερηίδα (849), καχρυφόρῳ (850), περιστεροέντα (860); see Introduction 6.2.

**πεῦκαι:** 'pines'.

884 **στρόμβοισιν:** a στρόμβος is similar to a στρόβιλος, which was originally a round ball, but came to mean pine-cone in later greek (e.g. Thphr. *HP* 3.9.1). Σ *Ther.* 883–884 tells us στρόμβους δέ φησιν αὐτὸν τὸν κονοειδῆ καρπὸν τῆς πεύκης. In fact 883–884, ἠδ' ὅσα ... | ... ναπαῖαι, is one large poetic periphrasis of what is simply pine-seed.

**ναπαῖαι:** a rare adj. (S. *OT* 1026, E. *HF* 958) based on νάπη, 'dell'. The adj. adds colour to the scenery painted here, with pines covering a valley as an image of natural beauty; for the aspect of natural beauty in the *Theriaca* see Spatafora 2005, 232–240.

885–895 Scorpius, Waterlilies, Pistachios, Hedge-Parsley, Myrtle-Berries, Sage, Fennel, Hedge-Mustard, Wild Chick-Pea

The next recipe features another cluster of topographical designations, as lines 887–890 contain seven such names. Although single toponyms do occur in the *Theriaca* (e.g. 145, 516, 529, 649), it is striking that names of regions, places or rivers usually come stringwise, e.g. 214–218, 458–462, 633–635, 668–670. Here we find a cluster of five names indicating Boeotia, which is not mentioned itself, but referred to by summing up its parts, just as Nic. did in his periphrastic descriptions of Thrace (458–468), and Lydia (633–635). In line 890, containing

two more names, reference is made to a region near the Indus, as the source of pistachios; for Nic.'s use of learned topography see Introduction 8.5.

885 **εἰ δέ:** for this combination at line-opening as a typical element of Hesiod's didactic poetry see 57 n. But there is a significant difference: just like εἴ γε in *Ther.* 80, εἰ δέ is cleary used exhortatively here, not conditionally.

**ἀβληχρέος:** 'soft', 'gentle'. Only here, next to the Homeric ἀβληχρός (e.g. *Il.* 5.337) and the common βληχρός. Both are etymologically related to μαλακός (*μλακ- > βλακ-). The problematic alpha, which can hardly be privative, has been explained in different ways, e.g. as a case of euphony or prothesis, but Reece (2009, 122–132) may well be right in assuming a case of junctural metanalysis in Homer and subsequent authors. Nic. is evidently borrowing from the epic *Kunstsprache* again, refraining from using the common βληχρός. For Nic.'s use of adj.'s with anomalous endings see Introduction 6.2.

886–887 The addressee is first told that the plant is likened to a certain dangerous animal; the name of this creature itself is postponed in enjambment to the next line, creating suspense. The element of likening a plant to a particular animal through its name is found elsewhere in the poem as well, cf. 628 and 882 n.; for the role of animals in the nomenclature of plants in general see Strömberg 1940, 28, 37, 65–71 et al. In each case the etymological connection between plant and animal is hinted at, and the plant's proper name is replaced.

886 **ἰοειδέϊ κέντρῳ:** literally with a stinger that is 'violet-coloured', i.e. purple. For interpretative problems of the adj., usually taken as 'poisonous', in the *Theriaca* see 234 n. Although the scorpion's stinger is poisonous, the likening of the plant known as σκορπίουρον to a scorpion is based on the look of the scorpion's tail, not its poisonous nature. But perhaps Nic.'s is deliberately being ambiguous, suggesting both the colour and shape of the violet (ἴον) and the fact that the animal disposes of poison (ἰός).

887 **σκορπίου:** 'scorpius'.

**σίδας Ψαμαθηΐδας:** 'waterlilies from Psamathe', a spring in Boeotia (Σ *Ther.* 887a c). The plant is discussed by Theophrastus (*HP* 4.10.1), who tells us that this root can be find in Orchomenos, which is in the north-west of Boeotia.

889 **βάλλει:** for the use of βάλλω for a river discharging in a sea or lake, cf. *Il.* 11.722, A.R. 2.744, D.P. 44.

**890** A third violation of Hilberg's Law; see 97 n. and Introduction 6.11.

**πολυφλοίσβοιο:** the adj. is a classical Homeric epithet (6× in the *Iliad*, 2× in the *Odyssey*), in the combination πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης, always at line-end. It makes a few appearances elsewhere in archaic poetry (Hes. *Op.* 648, *h.Merc.* 341, *h.Ven.* 4, *Cypr.* fr. 9.8 *PEG* (7 *EGF*), Archil. 13.3 *IEG*²), and one in comedy (Diphilus fr. 126.4 K-A), but is not imitated by any of the other Hellenistic poets. Nic., varying on Homer, applies it—in the same *sedes*—to a river; cf. 59 n.

**Χοάσπεω:** this is the only case of synizesis in the *Theriaca*, used as a prosodic tool. Just as in Homer it is used to accommodate metrically awkward names into the hexameter (e.g. Πηληιάδεω in *Il.* 1.1). Other Hellenistic poets are less hesitant to resort to synizesis, and do not use it merely for names, e.g. Theoc. 5.29, 7.122, 15.143, 22.26, Mel. *AP* 12.68.2 (*HE* 4589). This Choaspes, a river near the Hindu-Kush, is not to be confused with the eponymous river near Sousa, as the latter can of course not be called an Ἰνδὸν χεῦμα.

**891** **πιστάκι' … πέφανται:** a balanced four-word line that falls into two halves, with a chiastic alliteration of π- and α-, following the χ-alliteration in the previous line; for *versus tetracoli* see Introduction 6.8.

**πιστάκι':** this seems to be the first mention of pistachios in any extant Greek text, although Theophrastus is probably describing the same fruit in *HP* 4.4.7. Posidonius (second-first century BCE) tells us the pistachio (βιστάκιον) is found, like the persea-fruit (see 764 n.), in Arabia and Syria; cf. Dsc. *De materia medica* 1.124, who gives Syria as its origin. Nic. situates the central origin of the pistachio a little further, i.e. towards India. At any rate, it must have been an exotic product, not to be found in a random field, unlike many of Nic.'s ingredients. Dioscorides' remark about the medicinal use of pistachios against snakebites (ἐσθιόμενα δὲ καὶ πινόμενα ἐν οἴνῳ λεῖα ἑρπετοδήκτοις βοηθεῖ) does not show any verbal echoes of Nic., although the poet may have been one of his sources.

**ἀμυγδαλόεντα:** 'almond-like', only here; see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**892** Jacques, unhappy with the *asyndeton* between 891 and 892 proposes a lacuna after 891. Such an argument seems feeble considering several instances of *asyndeton* elsewhere in the poem, e.g. 526, 840, 858; cf. Spatafora 2007a, 193 n. 753.

**καυκαλίδας:** 'hedge-parsley'.

**φιμώδεα μύρτα:** the adj. is not found elsewhere. A φιμός is some kind of restraint, be it a muzzle or a noseband (Anyt. *AP* 6.312.2 = *HE* 715 = Geogh. 6). Here it is used metaphorically, describing the effect of myrtle berries, which have an astringent quality to them when used for medical purposes.

**893 κάρφεά … μαράθου:** *variatio*, with ὁρμίνοιο ('sage') as a gen. poss., next to μαράθου ('fennel') which is given a preposition, to avoid repetition; both modifiers express the same idea; see Introduction 6.10.

**894 εἰρύσιμόν … ἐρεβίνθου:** this is the only instance in the *Theriaca* of a *hephthemimeres*. Postponement of the caesura of the line to the fourth foot is not uncommon in Homer, nor in fourth-century hexameter poet (notably Archestratus), but the subsequent Callimachean refinements of the hexameter do not allow for absence of a caesura in the third foot; it is not found in Callimachus and Euphorion, and rarely in other Alexandrian poets; see West 1982, 153. Judging by the epic lengthening of the first word, the elided σπερμεῖ' (only here), and the violation of Callimachus' metrical principle Nic. had some difficulty with this line. There is, however, no real violation of Meyer's First Law, as τε is to be considered as postpositive and thus part of the 'parola metrica'; see Magnelli 1995 and Introduction 6.11.

**εἰρύσιμόν:** epicism for ἐρύσιμον, 'hedge-mustard'; only here.

**σπερμεῖ':** see 599 n.

**ἐρεβίνθου:** 'chick-pea'.

**895 βαρυώδεα:** only here, as a variant of βαρυαής (43), βαρύοδμος (51, 64), βαρύπνοος (76, 82); cf. Introduction 6.2 and 6.10.

### 896–900 Water-Cress, Melilot, Dropwort, Corn-Cockle, Plantain, Rose, Gillyflower

Another recipe, containing seven ingredients. Lack of instructions with regard to dosage or preparation, other than cutting, again reveal the poet's aim of painting a poetic picture of natural beauty. A reference to Homer in 896 creates a nice line-end, varying on other such endings in the *Theriaca*.

**896 ναὶ μὴν καί:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.6.

**σίσυμβρα:** 'water-cress'.

**πέλει:** a distinctly poetic verb, stemming from epic, but frequently used in later poetry. It seems to be shunned entirely by prose authors, and as such πέλω can be considered as a marked ingredient of poetic diction in general.

**μειλίγματα:** a Homeric hapax (*Od.* 10.216–217), used of scraps on which dogs are fed, considered soothing as they appease their hunger, ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἀμφὶ ἄνακτα κύνες δαίτηθεν ἰόντα | σαίνωσ'· αἰεὶ γάρ τε φέρει μειλίγματα θυμοῦ. Nic. retains the Homeric *sedes*, but applies the noun to alleviations of νούσων, i.e. a state of sickness caused by envenoming. Despite the difference in context, Nic. has retained the use of the noun for the appeasement of disagreeable bodily conditions; cf. the antonymic adj. ἀμείλικτος ('which cannot be appeased') in 185. Indeed, as Heubeck (1989, 56), commenting on *Od.* 10.216–217, explains: 'here μειλίγματα (*hapax*; cf. μειλίσσω) take the place of φάρμακα'. For the cognate μείλιον (varying on the Homeric *dis legomenon* μείλια, *Il.* 9.147, 289) to indicate a 'charm against' something to be averted or appeased cf. Call. *Dian.* 230. This particular line-end varies on similar endings elsewhere, ἀλεξητήρια νοῦσων (7), ἀλθεστήρια νοῦσων (493), ἄρκια νοῦσων (837). Although Nic.'s compositional technique is entirely different from Homer's formulaic technique, the result shows similarities, with four distinct nouns fitting four different lengths at the end of the hexameter.

**897** **μελιλλώτοιο:** 'melilot'.

**898** **οἰνάνθης:** 'dropwort'.

**νομῆες:** for the poet's variation of nouns for herdsmen see 5 n. and Introduction 6.10.

**899** **λυχνίς:** 'corn cockle'.

**θρυαλλίς:** 'plantain'.

**900** **ῥόδον:** 'rose'.

**ἴα:** 'gilliflowers'.

**σπερμεῖον:** see 599 n.

### 901–914 Knot-Grass, Depilatory, Hyacinth, Trefoil, Silphium, Tufted Thyme, Amphire, Lavender-Cotton, Anise, Libyan Roots

As the recipes presented get more complicated and more ingredients are added, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate between different treatments, as is clear from the various divisions offered by Gow & Scholfield and Jacques (as indicated by their division of the text into paragraphs). Only occasionally does the Greek help here, e.g. σὺν δέ τε καί … βάλλοις (907) ostensibly marks a continuation rather than a new section as implied by Jacques' division. Differences of opinion here underline the difficulty of following the poet's instructions literally, as it is often unclear whether the next element is an addition or an alternative.

The next recipe contains a brief but interesting digression on the death of Hyacinthus, occasioned by the mention of the plant known as ὑάκινθος ('blue larkspur'?). As usual in the *Theriaca* the story is told briefly and elliptically, yet it gives us some details not known from other sources, such as the setting of the accident near a river (904), the precise spot where the boy was hit (905–906) and a veiled reference to the aetiology of the letters supposedly legible on the plant's leaves (902).

**901** **πουλύγονον:** 'knot-grass'. For the epic ring of the use of the Ionic πουλυ- in the *Theriaca*, see 53 n. Not to be confused with the ornamental adj. πολύγουνος ('many-jointed') in 872.

**ὑπάμησον:** probably used as a *tmesis* in A. fr. 273a.3 *TrGF*, otherwise not found. Here it reflects Nic.'s preference for compound verbs, particularly rare ones.

**ἰάμνων:** see 30 n.

**902** **ψίλωθρον:** 'depilatory'; linked asyndetically to the previous line; see Introduction 6.8.

**902–906** In another brief excursion, triggered by the mention of the hyacinth, Nic. tells the myth of the unfortunate death of the young boy Hyacinthus, accidentally hit when playing with his lover Apollo, practicing in throwing the discus. The earliest attestation of the myth is found in [Hes.] fr. 171 MW (75 Hirschberger) from the *Ehoeae*, where a son of Diomede is involved in an incident with a discus. It is likely that Nic. treated the myth of Hyacinthus in more detail in his *Heteroeumena*. Σ *Ther.* 585a refers to another poem on Hyacinthus

by Nic.[19] but Schneider (1856, 45) may be correct in assuming it was part of the *Heteroeumena* rather than a separate work. Antoninus Liberalis (23) does tell us about a similar story (Apollo falling in love with the beautiful boy Hymenaeus) he found in the first book of Nic.'s *Heteroeumena*.

**πολυθρήνου ὑακίνθου:** before Nic. the adj. is only found in Aeschylus (*Ag.* 711, 714), of the lamentation uttered by (the people of) Troy, and Euripides (*Phaëth.* 70 Diggle = fr. 773.26 *TGF*), of the sad song sung by Itys turned into a nightingale. According to Diggle (1970, 100) neither in the Phaëthon, nor in the *Theriaca* does the adj. actively means 'much-wailing', but is used in the pass. sense, i.e. 'much lamented'. This is confirmed by *Ther.* 903, where we learn that Apollo is the wailer, not Hyacinthus himself. But the latter option, i.e. the dead boy whose blood caused a plant to grow, weeping for itself, cannot be ruled out here, as Nic. may be thinking of the aetiological tale of the leaves of the hyacinth showing the wailing *AI* or *AIAI*, as referred to in Euph. *CA* 40, p. 38, [Mosch.] 3.6, Luc. *DDeor.* 16, *Salt.* 45, Ov. *Met.* 10.215, Theoc. 10.28, Nonn. *D.* 3.155–163. An alternative tradition (found in Palaeph. 46) tells us that the leaves of the plant carry the letter Y (instead of *AI* or *AIAI*) in their veins, thus carrying the memory of Hyacinthus by showing the first letter of his Greek name. Although no clear reference is made to the aetiology itself, nor to the allegedly visible letters on the plant's leaves, Nic.'s choice for the adj. πολυθρήνος, used actively, may in fact be an implicit learned nod to the well-known story; cf. Cazzaniga (1958, 152) "πολυθρήνου (ὑακίνθου) con significato attivo".

**903** **Φοῖβος:** just like Callimachus and Apollonius (with the exception of A.R. 1.759) the god is called either Ἀπόλλων (as in *Ther.* 613), or Φοῖβος, but never Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, as is customary in Homer; see Williams 1978, 18 and Cuypers 1997, 241.

**θρήνησεν … ἔκτα:** for the use of the *figura etymologica* in 902–903 (πολυθρήνου … | … θρήνησεν) see Introduction 6.6.

**904** **παῖδα:** focusing on the fact that the victim was still a boy, emphatically at line-opening, in enjambment to ἔκτα.

19 If, however, the emendation of Cazzaniga (1958, 164) is correct, we should not read Nic. as the author, but Andreas, cf. Νίκανδρος (codd.) and [Νικ]'Ανδρέας; Crugnola 1971, 222.

**προπάροιθεν Ἀμυκλαίου ποταμοῖο:** early literary sources do not explicitly state a connection between Hyacinthus and the town of Amyclae. [Hes.] fr. 171 MW (75 Hirschberger) seems to tell us that the hero Amyclas was the father of Hyacinthus, although the papyrus offers little more than the uncertain ]κλας[; cf. Simm. *CA* 8, p. 112, where reference is made to the deceased son of Amyclas, but without mention of the name of Hyacinthus. The festival of the Hyacinthia, the location of Hyacinthus' tomb, and the attached cultus of the hero, however, do appear to be very old, and have always been connected to Laconia in general (E. *Hel.* 1473–1474) and to Amyclae, close to Sparta (see 670 n.), in particular (X. *HG*. 4.5.11), which housed a sanctuary for the hero from the late Mycenaean period on; Lafond 1996, 634.

*SSH* 1187 (*P.Oxy*. 3723), a fragmentary elegiac catalogue of exemplary loves of gods for boys, implies that Apollo left Delphi to go off to Sparta to court Hyacinthus; see Parsons & Bremer 1988, 61 and Williams 1988, 57. Palaephatus (46) is the first to call Hyacinthus Ἀμυκλαῖον; cf. Colluth. 239–248. No other source mentions Amyclae's river as the spot where Hyacinthus was accidentally slain. This may be an addition of Nic., perhaps due to his idea that hyacinths usually grow near rivers. This would suit 901, where knot-grass is said to grow in river-side meadows. Through association Nic. thus turns to another river-based ingredient, linked to the previous ones by means of the mention of Amyclae's river.

**905 πρωθήβην:** limited to poetry, at least until Parthenius (14.5); this is its usual *sedes* (*Od.* 1.431, 8.263, but cf. *Il.* 8.518); see Magnelli 1999, 146–147. Here for the first time the noun is directly linked with the boy's name. Apollonius, the only other Hellenistic poet to employ the rare Homeric adj., uses it, however, in reference to Hylas in 1.132. This use is interesting, as it not only connects the adj. with a particular boy, but also refers to a boy in the capacity of young male lover to a (demi)god, which may have triggered Nic.'s use here. Illustrative for this connection is *SSH* 1187 (*P.Oxy*. 3723), a fragmentary elegy containing famous examples of gods wooing boys; see Parsons & Bremer 1988. There too we find Hyacinthus and Hylas mentioned close together. Perhaps Nic. had this kind of homo-erotic catalogue poetry in mind when composing his brief digression on Hyacinthus? Incidentally both Heracles in the *Argonautica*, and Apollo in the story of Hyacinthus lose their young male lovers in close vicinity of a river.

**σόλος:** technically a mass of iron. It appears three times in Homer (*Il.* 23.826, 839, 944) where it is used as an iron object used for throwing in the games held in honour of Patroclus. As such it is perhaps closer to a shot, as used in shot-putting, and it is distinguished from a proper discus, which Homer

describes in *Od.* 8.186 as a δίσκον; cf. *Il.* 2.774. Alternatively it can be suggested that a σόλος is an iron discus, as opposed to wooden discuses (*Il.* 2.774, *Od.* 8.186), or stone ones (*Od.* 8.190, with the verb ἐδίσκεον in 188; cf. Hopkinson 1984, 145), used in the games of the Phaeaceans Odysseus participates in. Nic. may be thinking of an iron discus in particular, although undoubtedly the appeal of σόλος as a recherché synonym is relevant here as well.

**κόρσῃ:** 'temple'. Singular, as opposed to the more common κρόταφοι, which is usually employed in the plur. The latter is commonly used in matters of hair, growing luxuriantly around the temples (Theoc. 20.23), turning grey (*Od.* 11.319, Theoc. 14.68, 30.13), or just starting to grow (Theoc. 11.9, 15.85); other usages e.g. in A.R. 1.1261, of sweat pouring down over the temples of one's head. Conversely, κόρση is often used in a more precise manner, indicating the weak spot on the side of the skull, particularly in a context of violent wounding, e.g. *Il.* 4.502, 5.584, 13.576. In many cases, however, κόρση and κρόταφος (particularly the sg.) seem to be synonyms, cf. Hdt. 4.187, Theoc. 22.124–125, *Il.* 4.502, 20.397, Call. *Dian.* 78. For the use of κόρση as *pars pro toto* for head, suggested by Σ *Ther.* 903a too, see 750 n. Here such an interpretation would not fit ill, although temple makes better sense: not only is the temple the pre-eminent weak spot of the head, but it also fits the poet's interest in detail.

**906 πέτρου ἀφαλλόμενος:** this version, in which the iron σόλος ricochets on a rock and consequently strikes Hyacinthus' temple, is markedly different from the tradition in which Zephyrus is to blame. In that version, known from Palaephatus, Lucian, and Nonnus (see 902–906 n.) Zephyrus is a rival suitor to Apollo for Hyacinth's love. In the end, the gods' competition induces Zephyrus to send a sudden gust of wind, causing the discus just thrown by Apollo to hit the boy's head. Ovid's variant (*Met.* 10.183–185) is similar to Nic.'s version here, although he tells us the discus glances off as it hits the hard ground instead of a rock, *at illum* (i.e. *orbem*) | *dura repercusso subiecit verbere tellus* | *in vultus, Hyacinthe, tuos*.

**νέατον δ' ἤραξε κάλυμμα:** the blow of the discus hitting the young boy's head crushes the dura mater on the inside of his temple. Although κάλυμμα can be used for any kind of covering, its use here, qualified by νέατον, adds a particular detail, thus reflecting Nic.'s keenness on exact descriptions of physical damage to a body. The use of the adj. especially gives a medical touch to the description, as it apparently distinguishes between different layers of cerebral membrane. For attention to such particulars, a marked feature of Nic., in Hellenistic poetry, see 673 n. As it seems, getting hit by a discus was not an uncommon accident. It

is used as a plausible excuse in Call. *Cer.* 85 (Εὐρισίχθονα δίσκος ἔτυψεν) for the fact that Erysichthon cannot appear in public, allegedly because of his wound.

**907 τριπέτηλον:** here used as a noun, which only occurs elsewhere in 522 and in Call. *Dian.* 165. In all three instances it is a synonym of the plant τρίφυλλον, 'clover' or 'trefoil'. Callimachus probably picked it up from *h.Merc.* 530, its only previous occurrence, where it is used adjectivally of the three-leafed (or three-branched) golden staff given to Hermes by Apollo.

**ὀποῖό τε δάκρυα:** 'drops of the juice of silphium'. ὀπός can be used for different kinds of juice (e.g. rennet from fig-juice, *Il.* 5.902; gravy, Ath. 9.402c), but usually refers directly to the milky juice contained by plants. A particularly common ingredient in medicine is the juice of the plant silphium (ὀπὸς σιλφίου, Hp. *Acut.* 23, Thphr. *HP* 6.3.2), which is apparently so familiar that the mere use of ὀποῖο here is considered to be sufficiently clear; cf. Gal. 12.90 Kühn. Silphium, a herb from Cyrene (and found only there), was widely known for its curative powers, and as a result of its excessive use it died out early in antiquity; the last stalk is said to have been presented to Nero (Plin. *Nat.* 19.39). It was also prominent in cooking as a prestige flavour (cf. Archestr. 46.14 O-S = *SH* 176); Wilkins & Hill 2011, 20. The metaphorical use of δάκρυα for drops is not Nicandrean, as it is already used by Herodotus (2.96) to indicate drops from the acanthus; cf. E. *Med.* 1200. It is likely that it was already a dead metaphor by then. The anonymous *AP* 11.298.7 (ἀμπέλου ... δάκρυα) shows that such a metaphor can be renewed, but this appears not to be the case in Nic.

**908 ὀδελοῖσιν:** see 93 n.

**909 ἠὲ σύ γ':** see 63 n.

**ἕρπυλλον:** 'tufted thyme'.

**κεροειδέα:** see 243 n.

**κρῆθμον:** 'samphire'.

**910 ποίην κυπάρισσον:** 'lavendar-cotton'.

**911 ἄννησον:** 'anise'.

**Λιβυκάς ... ῥίζας:** 'Libyan roots'.

**ἐνικνήθεο:** 'grate into', only here and in *Al.* 368. The equally rare act. ἐπικνήθω is used in 698, on which see n.; for κατακνήθω see 944. Cf. Introduction 6.4.

**912 τότ' … τοτέ:** for this use of adv.'s of time, where the temporal element is all but absent see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9. The adv., here occurring as a pair, is used virtually as a synonym of ἤ.

**ἀμμίγδην:** see 21 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**ἄνδιχα:** used here as an antonym of ἀμμίγδην, as is underlined by the paired used of τότε, neatly corresponding in length and sound. This juxtaposition is, however, not found elsewhere. As a Homeric adv. ἄνδιχα follows the usual metrical *sedes*, occupying the fourth foot.

**913 ἐν κελέβῃ:** a drinking vessel, or perhaps a small bowl; Gow 1952b, 36. According to Σ *Ther*. 911–912 similar to a φιάλη, a bowl for drinking or libations, cf. Anacr. 11a, 38, 64 *PMG*. Antimachus refers to a honey-container as a κελέβειον; frr. 20.2 (24 Wyss), 22.2 (21 Wyss), and 23.5.

**πολλάκι:** apart from this adv. there is no indication to believe that either vinegar (ὄξεϊ, 913) or water (ὕδατι, 914) gives better results than wine (οἴνῃ, see 507 n.). It seems this is another instance (cf. 82 n. and 912 n.) of a temporal adv. used as a mere synonym for ἤ, apparently for the sake of variation; cf. 909, where πολλάκι seems to be used in a similar way.

**914 ἢ ὕδατι … γάλακτι:** the two different liquids encompass the line. The use of milk as an alternative to vinegar, wine and water is given a separate sentence, where ἤ would have sufficed. As such, stress is put on the urgency of the message, an urgency underlined by its position, as it hastily starts only after the *trithemimeres*.

**χραισμεῖ:** this is the first instance of the present of χραισμέω, which occurs only as an aor. or fut. in the *Iliad*; see 551 n.

### *915–933 Treatment of the Wound*

In this next section the poet purports to give concrete instructions with regard to the treatment of the wound itself. This applies both to a general remedy to be used in case of emergency, and to different techniques of disinfecting the wound. Here the focus is on what to *do*, unlike the previous recipes, which only tell how to prepare antidotes. The next treatments thus provide alternatives

to the oral ingestion of the prescribed remedies, essentially by drainage of the poison, through application of different substances to the wound.

915–920 General Remedy in Case of Emergency

So far Nic. has been giving instructions about the preparation of recipes without clarifying whether these cures need to be prepared in advance or immediately after one has been bitten, nor has he been clear about preparation at home (cf. n. on 576, 879, 891) or on the spot, e.g. when visiting remote areas (cf. n. on 145, 458–482). The next treatment serves to give some kind of aid that can be used when there is nothing else at hand, and when ready action is vital, which is underlined by several words that convey a sense of urge (916, 920).

**915 σ' ὁδοιπλανέοντα:** this line argues against the idea that Nic. is not giving instructions to the general addressee as a possible victim himself, but only as a doctor who knows how to act when called upon. Although the proem of the poem (4–7) raises the idea that Nic. is writing to an expert who is well versed in the art of medicine, perhaps a fellow doctor, 915 line clearly seems to indicate that the teacher's instructions are also aimed at the internal addressee as a potential victim, e.g. when travelling by foot. The rare verb is used intransitively, unlike in *Ther.* 267, on which see n.

**ἐν νεμέεσσιν ἀνύδροις:** as opposed to the water meadows in 901 (ἰάμνων), where the ingredients from the previous recipe can be found. For a similar attention to places with or without water cf. 26–30.

**916 νύχμα:** see 271 n. and Introduction 6.2.

**καταςπέρχῃ … αὐτίκα:** the verb underlines an element that has received little attention in the previous passages, viz. the need to make haste as the poison infects the wound. The verb is elsewhere used to indicate movement, e.g. Ar. *Ach.* 1188 (λῃστὰς ἐλαύνων καὶ κατασπέρχων δορί), Opp. *H.* 4.90–91 (οἱ δ' ἐλάτῃσι | νῆα κατασπέρχουσιν). Here the wound, although it cannot cause movement itself, presses for swift (αὐτίκα) action to be taken.

**917 ἀτραπιτοῖσι:** a Homeric variant of ἀτραπός, 'path'. As an epicism (and a Homeric *hapax legomenon* in *Od.* 13.195) it is used a.o. by Apollonius (4.123, 1173), Callimachus (*Del.* 74) and Rhianus (*CA* 1.15, p. 10; 72.1, p. 20). But whereas their use is part of their archaic epic diction to suit their mythical subject matter, in Nic. such epic words are used in a new context, detached from their older epic setting. See Introduction 7.3.

**918 μαστάζειν γενύεσσιν:** the verb μαστάζω, a lexical variant of μασάομαι, does not occur elsewhere. It is probably a Nicandrean coinage, similar to e.g. λιπάζω (90, 112) for λιπάω, or νομάζω, which is a *hapax legomenon* in 950; cf. Introduction 6.4. Gow & Scholfield (1953, 189) suggest that the juice contained in the plant serves as a substitute for water, as Nic. gives this remedy for waterless places in particular (ἀνύδροις, 915). A similar procedure is found in 547–549, where Alcibius was said to have pulled a random root from the soil, and chewed it with his teeth. Although there no mention is made of the effect of a plant's juice as a surrogate for water either, it is striking that there too the location (a threshing floor, 546) suggests a dry place; cf. the opposition between the threshing floor and the water meadows in 29–30.

**ἀμελγόμενος ἄπο:** the postposition of ἀπό, limited to poetry, is echoed in the next line with βάλοις ἔπι. For Nic.'s use of postposition see Introduction 6.8.

**919 τύμμασι:** varying on νύχμα, at line-opening as well, in 916. For such use of virtual synonyms see 653 n. The plur. may be pointing at a double bite, caused by the simultaneous use of both the snake's poison fangs. But a distributive use (pointing at the different wounds each time one is bitten) following the general condition in 915–916 (ἤν with subj.) makes better sense.

**λύματα δαιτός:** λύματα, used only twice in Homer (*Il.* 1.314, 14.171), was picked up by several Hellenistic poets (A.R. 4.710, Nic. *Ther.* 578, 918, *Al.* 259, 292), in particular by Callimachus (fr. 75.25 Harder, *Hec.* 114 H. = 295 Pf., *Jov.* 17, *Ap.* 109, *Cer.* 115). As pointed out by Hopkinson (1984, 170–171), Nic.'s combination at line-end is based on Call. *Cer.* 115, αἰτίζων ἀκόλως τε καὶ ἔκβολα λύματα δαιτός, of Erysichthon "begging for crusts and scraps thrown away from the feast" (transl. Hopkinson). λύμα expresses dirt, both in a ritual (pollution) and a physical sense (refuse, offscourings). In the context of *Cer.* 115 the noun has a particularly negative meaning, expressing how low Erysichthon has fallen. As usual Nic. takes the rare noun out of its previous contexts and applies it in a new way (see Introduction 7.3): here the unsavoury half-eaten remains (ἡμίβρωτα … λύματα δαιτός) may be repulsive as well, but they are not connected to blameworthy behaviour. Gross though they may be, they are a result of sensible conduct, taking the right precautions to counter the effect of the poison.

**920 δύην:** 'anguish, woe' (cf. *Al.* 19), a poeticism hailing from Homer (*Od.* 14.215, 18.53, 81), also found in tragedy. Its only appearance in Callimachus is *Hec.* 131 H. (fr. 325 Pf.), δύην ἀπόθεστον ἀλάλκοι (*sedes* unclear), perhaps varied on here by Nic.'s δύην … ἀλύξῃς. Apollonius is the only other Hellenistic poet

who uses the noun (1.120, 907, 2.769, 4.38, 1387, 1649), but there do not seem to be any allusions in Nic. to his. The juxtaposition with κῆρα effectively spells out the two horrifying consequences of poisoning.

**καταςπέρχουσαν:** the repetition, uncharacteristic of Nic.'s style, of καταςπέρχω (916), is not only due to the alliteration of the κ- in three words of increasing syllable length in 920, but also expresses haste: as the wound urges the victim on to take ready action, so the poison is hurrying to fulfil its task.

**ἀλύξῃς:** see 139 n.

### 921–933 Poison Draining, Cauterising, Curative Unguent

Unlike earlier treatments, the previous remedy consisted of applying herbal material to the wound itself. The next treatment is in the same vein, prescribing several ways of draining the poison from the wound, throug the use of a cupping tool (921–922), by immersion of the inflicted member—in case of wounds in ankle or hand—in wine (926–929), or by applying leeches which will suck out the poison from the wound (930). The passage is replete with lexical rarities and synonyms already displayed elswhere in the poem.

**921** **ναὶ μὴν καί:** see 51 n. and Introduction 5.6.

**σικύην χαλκήρεα:** a bronze cupping vessel in the shape of a gourd. The noun is not some kind of original metaphor, but is used as a technical term to indicate a particular instrument used in forging (as in Arist. *Rh.* 1405b3) or medical treatment (Pl. *Ti.* 79e). The adj., despite its neutral meaning here, has connotations of war, due to its frequent use in earlier poetry (particularly Homer) of bronze-tipped weapons, following one of the two common Homeric *sedes*. As such, Nic.'s use here echoes Homeric diction.

**λοιγέϊ τύψει:** for the rare adjectival coinage λοιγής see 6 n. and Introduction 8.8. τύψις is another coinage, found only here and in 933, being a lexical variant of τύμμα; see 2 n. and Introduction 6.10. The combination is a good example of the poet's sophisticated language, not merely borrowing from Homer and later epic poets, but actively contributing to a learned diction in striving for ultimate *variatio*.

**923** **κράδης γλαγόεντα … ὀπόν:** 'milky juice of the fig'. κράδη is not any branch, but that of the fig-tree in particular, as is usual from Hesiod (*Op.* 681) on; West 1978, 325. It is not clear whether the milky juice is taken from the fruit or from

the tree, e.g. from the bark, but κράδης ὀπός is fig-juice in Hp. *Ulc.* 12. The adj. is not found elsewhere, apart from Opp. *H.* 4.113. For Nic.'s preference for coining adj.'s in -εις see 34 n. and Introduction 6.2.

924 **καυστειρῆς ... καμίνου:** see 15 n. The adj. is a Homeric *dis legomenon* (μάχης καυστείρης, *Il.* 4.342, 12.316), not found elsewhere. It is properly the fem. of καυστήρ (usually spelled καυτήρ, Chantraine 481), but was later interpreted as the fem. of καυστειρός, which induced Oppian to use the masc. gen. καυστειροῖο (*H.* 2.509). Nic.'s use is an inversion of Homer's metaphorical use (of 'raging' battle); whereas καυστείρης is evidently a unique lexical imitation, the poet succeeds in varying on Homer by returning to the adj.'s literal meaning.

**θαλφθεῖσαν:** unless σίδηρον in the previous line is fem. here (so LSJ), which is otherwise unattested, this is another instance of the poet's indulgence in *inconcinnitas*; see Introduction 6.9.

**ὑπὸ στέρνοισι:** for the use of στέρνος to indicate the inside of an object, cf. 91, where the stony heart of a mortar is described similarly. Although rather straining the order of the sentence, ὑπό can be taken alternatively as governing καυστείρης ... καμίνου, the agent of the pass. part., personifying the furnace, with στέρνοις as a local dat.

925 **ἄλλοτε:** see 37 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**φορβάδος αἰγός:** although the line appears to start with the rustic image of a grazing goat, the reference turns out to be not to the goat itself, but merely to the use of its hide as as wineskin. εὐθρέπτου ('well-reared'), the explanation for the odd φορβάς given by Σ *Ther.* 925a, makes slightly better sense. The idea seems to be that φορβάς points at goats that graze in the pasture as opposed to those which are fed in the stable (cf. Cuypers 1997, 125), and that the skin of a pasturing goat is of a better quality to use as a wineskin.

**ἐνίπλειον δέρος οἴνης:** the use of δέρος instead of the common δέρμα is all but limited to poetry (viz. tragedy and Apollonius, not in Homer), always referring to an animal's skin as such. By using it for a wineskin, usually called ἄσκος (e.g. *Od.* 6.78, 9.196, cf. *Ther.* 927) Nic. deflates the poetic noun in using it for a household item. The poetic level of the diction is retained by using οἴνη, an old name for vine, as a rare etymological metonymy for οἶνος; see 507 n. For latter use cf. *Al.* 162, δέπας ἔμπλεον οἴνης, and Leon. Tarent. *AP* 6.334.5 (*HE* 1970),

σκύφος ἔμπλειος οἴνης, both at line-end. The suggestion of Gow & Page (1965b, 313) that Nic. may owe his use of οἴνη in *Al.* 162 to Leonidas may hold true for *Ther.* 925 as well, but Nic. uses οἴνη for οἶνος throughout.

**926 χραισμήσει:** see 576 n.

**τημοῦτος:** a very rare variant of the adv. τῆμος/τημόσδε, perhaps a dialect form (West 1978, 303), found in Hes. *Op.* 576. Before Nic. the Hesiodic *hapax legomenon* is imitated by Callimachus (*Dian.* 175, fr. 75.44 Harder), reflecting both authors' keenness on such rarities. Perhaps the fact that Nic. follows the Callimachean *sedes* of the adv. shows where he picked it up.

**σφυρὸν ἢ χέρα:** earlier in the poem Nic. has shown that these are likely places to get wounded, viz. 17, κατὰ σφυρόν (Orion gets stung in the ankle by a scorpion) and 752, χειροδρόποι (hand-picking harvesters get bitten by spiders), but his mention of these spots serves a particular purpose in the procedure here: hand or foot needs to be placed inside the wineskin (filled with wine) in order for the wine to dilute the poison in the wound, as explained in the next three lines.

**κόψῃ:** adding to the wide range of verbs for striking employed by the poet, cf. οὐτάω (743), τύπτω (2, 202, 313, 330, 836), ἰάπτω (116, 358, 784), χαλέπτω (309, 445), σίνομαι (702), βλάπτω (485); for *variatio* as a motif in Nic.'s language see Introduction 6.10.

**927 ἀσκοῦ ἔσω:** another instance of postposition; see Introduction 6.8. As unnecessary repetition of nouns is ardently avoided by Nic. here we find ἀσκός as a synonym for δέρος in 925.

**βαρύθοντα … ἐρείσας:** to whom or what is βαρύθοντα referring? Gow & Scholfield assume it to be a (male) victim, in which case the addressee is given instructions to give succour to someone else, 'you will fix the sufferer in the wineskin to the mid forearm or ankle'; for the same interpretation see Touwaide 1997, 196–197. This recalls 4–7 of the proem, where the poet foresees that Hermesianax will be praised when lending aid to others in need of treatment. Jacques, on the other hand, takes βαρύθοντα with πῆχυν and σφυρόν, assuming that the addressee is given instructions to treat himself.

**μέσου διά:** Gow & Scholfield take the mss reading μέσον with διὰ πῆχυν ("to the mid forearm"), but separate βαρύθοντα as a distinct victim. Jacques (2002, 73) reads μέσου διά (another postposition, see Introduction 6.8.; διά never under-

goes anastrophe) and connects it to the wineskin ("en plein milieu de l' outre") which makes good sense: in order for the inflicted hand (or foot for that matter) to be steeped fully in wine, the victim needs to put his entire forearm into the wineskin down to the lower half of the bag, so that even if the wineskin is only half-full the cure will be effective. A third option, taking διά *in tmesi*, makes little sense as it awkwardly leaves the adj. dangling.

928 **ἀσκοδέτῃσι πέριξ … ἑλίξεις:** ἀσκοδέτης is only found here; probably a household word for the strings used to tie up a wineskin.

930 **δήποτε:** see 683 n.

**βδέλλας:** 'leeches'.

931 **κρομμυόφι:** the use of the -φι(ν) suffix, here denoting an ablative (usually with a preposition; Smyth § 280) is archaic, regularly found in Homer and Hesiod, but rarely afterwards. Occurrences among Hellenistic authors mainly comprise imitations, e.g. βίηφι (Call. *Dian.* 77, [Theoc.] 25.138), ἑτέρηφι ([Theoc.] 25.207, 253), ἶφι (Simm. *AP* 15.27.6, Arat. 588, *Batr.* 264, Euph. *CA* 90.2, p. 46; see Magnelli 2002, 11 n. 22), ἰκριόφιν (A.R. 1.566, 4.80, 1663), ἐσχαρόφιν (A.R. 2.494). Occasionally, however, original forms seem to be produced, viz. ζεύγληφι (Call. *Dian.* 162, a learned variation on ζυγόφιν, *Il.* 24.576). Nic. uses the suffix here to give a markedly unheroic object (an onion) an epic touch; cf. ἀϊδρείηφι in 409. For similar applications of archaic epic diction see Introduction 6.3.

**ἄλλοτε:** see 83 n. and Introduction 6.9.

**οἴνης:** see 925 n.

932 **μίγδην:** see 615 n. and Introduction

**ἐν πυράθοισι:** 'on sheep's dung'. σπύραθοι or σπύραδες (σφύραδες in Attic) are droppings of sheep or goats (e.g. in Ar. *Pax* 790). σπύραθος is the common form found in medical prose from the Hippocratic corpus on; Reece 2009, 69. Nic.'s form, i.e. without the sigma, is not found elsewhere and is probably a poetic variant.

933 **τύψιν:** see 921 n. and Introduction 6.10. As a lexical variant the coinage avoids the unsatisfactory repetition of τύμμα in 930.

**νεαλεῖ δὲ πάτῳ:** 'with the fresh dung'. The use of πάτος, elsewhere used for path or course (as in 479), for dung, is limited to Nic. (here and in *Al.* 535).

### *934–956 A General Remedy*

With a final recipe we arrive at the end of the poem, to be concluded only by a very short epilogue containing the *sphragis* of the poet (957–958). This recipe is meant as a general remedy (ἀληξητήριον, 934), supposedly applicable to every single kind of envenoming by any of the animals treated in the poem. Rather than being a proper panacea (the poet does not use the name πανάκειον or its cognates here), Nic. seems to have placed this recipe at the end of the poem, to give one last display of his virtuosity, alleged knowledge, and dexterity, fitting thirty odd ingredients in some twenty lines. As a *tour de force* of fitting many names in few verses it is somewhat reminiscent of earlier epic catalogues, such as Hesiod's catalogue of the fifty (or fifty-one; see West 1966, 236) Nereids in *Th.* 240–264. The poet thus combines this *tour de force* with some sort of grand finale, which, as Sistakou points out (2012, 232), shows Nic.'s fascination of 'the idea of the absolute medicine that would cure all poisonings. He thus proceeds with the detailed description of the ultimate recipe for the most desired drug ever prepared.'

> 934–956 Birthwort, Iris, Spikenard, All-Heal, Pellitory, Wild Carrot, Black Bryony, Peony, Black Hellebore, Native Sodium Carbonate, Cummin, Fleabane, Stavesacre, Bay's Berries, Tree-Medick, Horse-Moss, Cyclamen, Poppy-Juice, Seeds of Agnus Castus, Balsam, Cassia, Cow-Parsnip, Salt, Hare's Curd, Crab, Juice of Cleavers

**934 πάσῃσιν ἀλεξητήριον ἄταις:** for ἀλεξητήριον cf. ἀλέξιον (702, 805, *Al.* 4), ἄλκαρ (698), ἀλκτήριον (528, *Al.* 350), ἄρκιον (837). Gow & Scholfield's description 'a general panacea' (1953, 91) is apt, but cf. n. on 508, 565 and 626, discussing the meaning of the Greek words for panacea.

**ἄταις:** in Nic. always at line-end; see 798 n.

**935 πεπύθοιο:** epic reduplicated aor. opt., only used by Nic. (*Al.* 336, 434), based on the Homeric πεπύθοιτ' (*Il.* 6.50, 10.381, 11.135) from πεύθομαι, followed in A.R. 4.1469. As a *protasis* ὄφρα … πεπύθοιο is awkward, as ὄφρα only comes with an opt. after past tenses, but this does seem to be the best solution.

**τό:** probably relative. The Homeric possibility of using the article as a demonstrative pronoun, subsequently used as a relative (occasionally found in tragedy

too, Smyth § 1105), is still found in Hellenistic poetry (e.g. Theoc. *AP* 6.177.1 = *Ep.* 2 Gow). Elsewhere in the poem, however, Nic. usually has the proper relative pronoun (64, 168, 353, 451, 685, 734, 747, 775, 789), with the exception of 738. Nic.'s use here is clearly connected with his choice for the Homeric κρήγυον, echoing *Il.* 1.106, τὸ κρήγυον εἶπας.

**κρήγυον:** 'servicable', only once in Homer, in the famous speech of Agamemnon to Calchas, μάντι κακῶν οὐ πώ ποτέ μοι τὸ κρήγυον εἶπας (*Il.* 1.106). Nic., following the Homeric *sedes*, has inserted the word in a new, yet apt context: unlike Calchas, who is said to be a prophet of doom, Nic. poses as a teacher who brings a message of knowledge, conveying welcome information indeed to the addressee. Moreover, whereas Calchas is accused of never ever having brought a favourable message, Nic. has been presenting treatments that are κρήγυον throughout the poem. There is some discussion about the proper meaning of the adj. ('true' or 'good'). Whereas many poets correctly took the adj. to mean ἀγαθόν (Gow 1952b, 366; Pulleyn 2000, 156), some ancient poets, misinterpreting the correct meaning of *Il.* 1.106, took it to mean ἀληθής (Theoc. 20.19, Leon. Tarent *AP* 7.648.9 = *HE* 2012, Arch. *AP* 5.58.1 = *GPh* 3588; Gow & Page 1965b, 321). This interpretation, however, makes no sense here.

**936** **θρόνα:** see 99 and 493 n. θρόνα πάντα appears in the same *sedes* in 493. There Nic. told us he would instruct us in all the necessary herbs; here we learn how to prepare a panacea based on a selection of herbs, all of which need to be mixed together.

**μιῇ ὑπὸ χειρί:** not a common expression; μιᾷ χειρί means single-handed in D. 21.219, of assaulting many 'with a single fist', which is not particularly apt here. The same goes for ἐν μιᾷ χειρί in LXX. *Ne.* 14.11.3, where it is complemented by a description of the other hand ('the builders worked with one hand and held a javelin in the other'). The only other occurrence comes from Hp. *Int.* 46.10, σικύου τοῦ ἀγρίου πέντε φύλλα τρῖψαι λεῖα, καὶ παραμῖξαι μέλιτος ἡμικοτύλιον, καὶ ἀλῶν δραξάμενος τῇ μιῇ χειρί, but here the complementary use of the other hand is implicit too. Σ *Ther.* 936 take the combination to mean ὑπὸ τῇ ἰδίᾳ χειρί; Eutecnius leaves the phrase out. If Σ is right a distinction seems to be made between cures prepared by others as opposed to those prepared by the addressee himself, a distinction that would be pointless here. Arguably a literal use is meant, viz. the hand covering the ingredients in a vessel during preparation, while the other hand adds more, but the best solution seems to lie in the (chiastic) juxtaposition with θρόνα πάντα: the oppo-

sition between 'all ingredients together' and 'by one single hand' enhances the literary effect of the power in the hands of those who possess the proper knowledge. This interpretation is particularly effective at the end of the poem, where for one last time the power of knowledge is underlined in a single long recipe.

**ταράξῃς:** 'stirring', used in a variety of metaphorical contexts, e.g. clouds (*Od.* 5.291), or waves (Archil. 105.1 *IEG*$^2$, Sol. 12.1 *IEG*$^2$ = 13 Gentili-Prato), but seldom of literally stirring, e.g. ingredients with a spoon. A playful reference is perhaps intended in Sol. 37.7–8 (31 Gentili-Prato), οὐκ ἂν κατέσχε δῆμον, οὐδ' ἐπαύσατο | πρὶν ἀνταράξας πῖαρ ἐξεῖλεν γάλα; literal use (of mixing ingredients to stir them) elsewhere in Amips. 18 K-A, λαγὸν ταράξας πῖθι τὸν θαλάσσιον ('drink the sea-slug mixed with …') and Luc. *Lex.* 4.

937 **ἀριστολόχεια:** see 509.

**ἴριδος:** 'iris', cf. 607.

**νάρδου:** 'spikenard'; cf. 604.

937–938 **ἐν δέ τε νάρδου | ῥίζαι:** to increase the sense of flow in this long and winding final recipe, strong enjambments (937–938, 938–939, 941–942, 943–944, 944–945, 949–950) are used, next to the technique of starting new elements after the bucolic diaeresis (939, 941, 943, 946).

938 **ῥίζαι χαλβανίδες:** 'all-heal's roots'. The adj., not found previously, is coined for the occasion. χαλβάνη is the resinous juice of all-heal (πάνακες); for the possible difference between πάνακες and πανάκειον see 508 n.

**πυρέθροις:** 'pellitory'.

939 **εἶεν:** corresponding with ἐν μέν in 937. Yet another variant of instruction; see Introduction 6.10.

**δαυκείου τε παναλθέος:** 'of all-curing wild carrot'; another coined adj., not found elsewhere. Although apparently synonymous to πανακής (see 508 n.), the adj. is introduced as a colourful epithet, not as the designation of a plant or related to the proper *panacea* (πάνακες, 565).

**βρυώνης:** 'black bryony'; cf. 858.

**940** **νεωρυχέος:** only here, used as a different way (cf. 498 νεοκμῆτας) of stressing that the plant needs to be fresh when being prepared; another chiasmus, as in 936.

**γλυκυσίδης:** 'peony'.

**941** **ἐλλεβόρου μελανόχροος:** 'black hellebore'.

**ἄμμιγα:** see 949 n.

**941–942** **ἄφρος | λίτρου:** ἀφρόνιτρον is native sodium carbonate. According to Phrynichus (*PS* 272) and Pliny (*Nat.* 20.66) ἄφρος νίτρου is the correct rendering. Nic., however, preferring the rarer and older form to the better one, is likely to have used λίτρου (Hdt. 2.86–87, Ar. fr. 320.1, Pl. *Ti.* 60d etc.).

**942** **κύμινα:** 'cummin'.

**κονύζης:** 'fleabane'; cf. 615 and 875.

**943** **σταφίδος:** 'stavesacre'.

**ἶσα δὲ δάφνης | σπερμεῖα:** see 937 n.

**ἄμμιγα:** see 949 n.

**944** **κύτισον:** 'tree-medick'.

**κατακνήθειν:** only here; cf. the variant coinage ἐπικνήθων in 698, and ἐνικνήθεο in 911. See Introduction 6.4.

**χαμηλήν:** see 841 n.

**945** **ἱππεῖον λειχῆνα:** literally 'horse-lichen'; used periphrastically for ἱππολείχην, which, according to Σ *Ther.* 945 is a particular kind of moss growing on the legs of horses. In order to use the ingredient one needs to shave it off the horse's legs and mix it in a drink.

**κυκλάμινον:** 'cyclamen'.

**946** **μήκωνος:** 'poppy'.

**ἄγνου:** 'agnus castus'; cf. 530.

**947 βάλσαμόν:** 'balsam'.

**ἐν … βαλέσθαι:** for the use of the *infinitivus pro imperativo* see Introduction 6.10.

**κινάμοιο:** 'cassia'.

**948 σφονδύλειον:** 'cow-parsnip'.

**ἁλός τ' ἐμπληθέα κύμβην:** for κύμβη, 'table-bowl' of salt, see 526 n. The adj. ἐμπληθέα is only found here, varying on the common ἔμπλεος.

**949 ἄμμιγα:** see 41 n. and Introduction 6.2, 6.4, and 6.10. The adv. is used remarkably frequent in this part of the poem (850, 857, 941, 943, 949, 954), which may reflect that the poet had some difficulties to fit so many plant-names into relatively few hexameters; there just does not seem to be enough space metrically to adhere to the ideal of lexical variation pursued elsewhere.

**καρκίνον:** 'crab'.

**949–950 τάμισον … | πτωκός:** curd of the hare proves to be a popular ingredient in Nic.'s recipes; cf. 577–578 (τάμισον σκίνακος νεαροῖο λαγωοῦ | ἢ προκὸς ἠὲ νεβροῖο) and 711 (ταμίσοιο λαγωοῦ). The crab too made a previous appearance (606). The order of treatment here is unusual, as first two ingredients are mentioned, after which both are explicited. πτώξ occurs twice in the *Iliad*, once as an adj. with λαγωός ('hare'), meaning 'cowering' (22.310, cf. πτώσσω), and once as a noun, replacing λαγωός in a kenning-kind of manner (*Il.* 17.676). Here too the poet has πτωκός as a rare synonym for λαγωός, and as latter was used in relation to curd in 577, here an alternative is offered by the poet to maintain his ever-important pursuit of *variatio*.

**950 πολυστίοισι:** the line serves to add some detail of scenery to the dull descriptions of the final recipe, underlined by the triple alliteration of the π- and the flow of the colourful epithet of the river. As Magnelli (2006, 188) points out, the epithet, borrowed from Call. *Jov.* 26 (see 792 n.), not only reflects Nic.'s fondness of Callimachus' innovative coinages, but it also recalls a setting (reptiles, rivers) similar to Nic.'s.

**νομάζων:** literally 'grazing', but used metaphorically of a crab, which is pictured as having the pebbly river as its νομός. The verb only occurs in Nic. (cf. 407, of foraging wild animals, and *Al.* 345, of grazing heifers).

951 **τὰ μέν:** summing up all the ingredients mentioned in 937–950; cf. οἷσιν in 837, and αἵδε μέν in Hes. *Op.* 822, in the same position, for a similar manner of taking together large parts in recapitulation towards the end of the poem.

**ἐν στύπεϊ ... ὅλμου:** varying on ὅλμος ('mortar', 506, 644). A στύπος, originally a stem (e.g. of a vine, as in A.R. 1.1117), is a stump or block, ostensibly pointing at the stone or wooden block made hollow in which the mortar is cut. The many ingredients summed up ask for a large vessel indeed, and the capaciousness of this particular utensil is futher underlined by the colourful adj.

**πολυχανδέος:** perhaps Nic. is thinking of Theoc. 13.46, which ends in πολυχανδέα κρωσσόν (same *sedes*), of the water-pitcher carried by Hylas, who is sent out into the woods never to return. As such the epithet is both rare and apt for any capacious vessel. The π-alliteration of the previous line is continued with two more long words, with the rare πολυ-compound echoing πολυστίοισι in the previous line.

952 **λαϊνέοισιν ... ὑπέροισιν:** 'with pestles of stone'. The plur. is probably merely poetic, although in 114 a similar plur. may point at a particular plur. use for utensils. With ὕπερον another synonym for pestle is added to τριπτήρ (95) and λάκτις (109). The combination of ὅλμου (end of 951) and ὑπέροισιν here echoes Hes. *Op.* 423, ὅλμον μὲν τριπόδην τάμνειν, ὕπερον δὲ τρίπηχυ. Nic. has separated the two halves, and has given them separate qualifications in two consecutive lines.

**ἐπιπλήσσων:** used in Homer of striking (*Il.* 10.500) and rebuking. Later poets use the latter meaning as 'chastising', 'punishing', but usually only in words. Here Nic. returns to the literal and original meaning of striking, not, however, angrily with a longbow (as in Homer), but purposefully with a tool, giving the Homeric verb a new context.

953 **αἶψα ... αὐαλέοισι ... ἀπαρινέα:** another alliteration, continued in the next line with ἄμμιγα. The need to proceed at once (αἶψα) with the next step is reflected metrically by the use of a holodactylic line.

**ἀπαρινέα:** 'cleavers'.

**954** **ἄμμιγα:** see 949 n.

**955** **δραχμαίους:** see 519 n.

**πλάστιγγι:** 'with a balance'. The recipe is clearly not meant for ready preparation for someone on the road or out in the field, but needs to be prepared well in advance.

**956** **οἴνης:** see 507 n.

**ταράξας:** see 936 n.

### *957–958 Epilogue:* Sphragis

With the last instructions and the drink resulting from the recipe prepared, the last cure expounded ends, to be followed by a very short conclusion of the poem, consisting of a single sentence in a mere two lines. Although the end of the poem was more or less heralded by the grand finale of the ultimate panacea in 934–956, the end still comes both unexpectedly and abruptly. If the last recipe is indeed intended to baffle the external addressee by its flowing description of ingredient after ingredient, then the abrupt end gives the listener an opportunity to get his bearings. Moreover, a longer epilogue would have diminished the element of surprise here.

That the format of the epilogue is chosen deliberately seems clear from the epilogue of the *Alexipharmaca*, which is similar in form and shows the same features, καί κ' ἔνθ' ὑμνοπόλοιο καὶ εἰσέτι Νικάνδροιο | μνῆστιν ἔχοις, θεσμὸν δὲ Διὸς ξενίοιο φυλάσσοις. But apart from these two epilogues, the tradition of didactic poetry, or even epic in general, seems to be characterised by relatively short endings. In the case of didactic epic, this may be due to the *Works and Days*, which ends even more abrupt than the *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*. This of course, has always been explained by the fact that the poem is not supposed to end at 828 (or did not in fact end in 828) but carried on, expounding knowledge about the ways of the birds, as heralded in the last line transmitted, ὄρνιθας κρίνειν; West 1978, 364–365. Yet Hellenistic readers may well have considered *Op.* 828 the end of the poem, which may have induced Nic. to consider a brief and abrupt end a characteristic of didactic poetry. By comparison, the *Theogony* suffers from the same problems (leading in the *Catalogue of Women*), and Aratus, evidently following the tradition started by Hesiod, ends his *Phaenomena* no less abrupt with the brief remark τῶν ἄμυδις πάντων ἐσκεμμένος εἰς ἐνιαυτόν | οὐδέποτε σχεδίως κεν ἐπ' αἰθέρι τεκμήραιο, "If you have watched for these signs all together for the year, you will never make an uninformed judgement

on the evidence of the sky" (transl. Kidd). Kidd (1997, 577) does, however, point out that brief though the conclusion of the poem may be, it does look back on the proem by means of a reference, thus creating a subtle ring composition. The format—one sentence, two lines—is similar enough to Nic.'s epilogue. If the epilogue is thus considered, it fits well in the tradition of didactic poetry, briefness being a characteristic rather than an exception. Such a characteristic is in fact not limited to didactic hexameter poetry, but extends to Hellenistic epic narrative, considering the equally abrupt end of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, or Moschus' *Europa*. By comparison, the balanced end of the *Aetia* (Call. fr. 112 Harder) does not share this characteristic.

957 **Ὁμηρείοιο:** a marked epithet, particularly in a poem that all but lacks overt statements about poetic influences or forebears, despite its host of allusions to relevant poets and implicit references pointing at the literary traditions in which Nic. wants his work to be read; cf. Magnelli 2010, 216. Hesiod is of course mentioned in the proem (12), but without any evident comment about his status as a poet. Why does Nic. refer to himself by means of an epic epithet pointing at Homer? Several layers seem to be at work here:

(i) Being 'Homeric' points at the poet's diction, which is an amalgam of epic borrowings, imitations (with a keen eye on *hapax* and *dis legomena*) and innovations, suitable to Homer's language, although often Nic. seems to indulge so much in his yielding of epic words that a sort of 'hyperhomeric' or even 'metahomeric' diction is the result; cf. Spatafora 2007, 202. The very form Ὁμηρείοιο, with the epic gen. in -οιο is symbolic of Nic.'s urge to write within the varied archaic diction of Homer, even if such forms do not literally occur in early epic; see Introduction 6.3. Cf. Σ *Ther.* 957, where Nic. is presumed to call himself Homeric διὰ τὸν ζῆλον. For a similar qualification of an elaborately epicising poet cf. Crates *AP.* 11.218.1 (*HE* 1371), where Euphorion is said to be Ὁμηρικός, partly because of his fondness for glosses, *καὶ κατάγλωσσ' ἐπόει τὰ ποιήματα*; cf. Magnelli 2002, 5 and 54–56. See, however, also Oikonomakos 1999, 238. The idea that the reference here is rather to Homer as Nic.'s stylistic model is held by Jacques 2002, lxxi and 2007, 102.

(ii) The mention of Homer at the end of the poem corresponds to Hesiod at the beginning. Both poets, precursors and models in their own way, thus encase the poem as a ring composition. It is Hesiod that started the tradition of didactic epic, which is so avidly followed by Nic., yet Homer is the ultimate source for diction, imagery and adaptation of language. It is notable that Nic. so obviously states Homer as relevant to his work, particularly with the viewpoints of other Hellenistic poets in mind, as they seem to make an effort *not* to portray themselves as Homeric, cf. Call. *AP* 9.507 (*HE* 1297–1300 = 27 Pf.), where

Aratus is praised as an epigon of Hesiod, not Homer (Ἡσιόδου τό τ' ἄεισμα καὶ ὁ τρόπος, 27.1). Likewise in *Id.* 7.45–47 Theocritus makes clear that one should not attempt the impossible: Homer is out of reach and should not be imitated. Nic.'s opposite stance is remarkably self-confident, a confidence that already showed elsewhere in the poem (see Introduction 5.1, 805 n.). This opposition between 'callimachean' aesthetics and the imitation of the Homeric epic style is corroborated by Nic.'s appreciation of Antimachus (see under iii.), a poet of whom Callimachus strongly disapproved; cf. fr. 398 Pf. Λύδη καὶ παχὺ γράμμα καὶ οὐ τόρον, '(Antimachus') *Lyde*, a fat and obscure book', and the (reconstructed) bad press of the *Lyde* (or the *Artemis*?) in fr. 1.10 Harder. Programmatically Nic.'s claim to being 'Homeric' is thus a strong dissenting voice within the discussion of Alexandrean poetic aesthetics.

(iii) Nic.'s relation to Clarus in the next line, which is all but synonymous to Colophon, may be relevant here as well, as Colophon was one of the many cities claiming to have brought forth Homer; cf. fr. 14 Schneider, *Certamen* 2, Str. 14.1.28, Luc. *VH* 2.20, *AP* 9.213.3 (*FGE* 1248), Lobo *APl* 292.1–2, and 16.295–299, a series of epigrams on Homer's origin, all affirming the tradition of Homer's Colophonic origin; see Pasquali 1913, 89; cf. Magnelli 2010, 216. In Σ *Ther.* 957, καί κεν Ὁμηρείοιο is explained as διὰ τὴν πατρίδα, and Matthews (1996, 18) points at the interesting phenomenon that Homer is represented on first century BCE Colophonian coins. In addition, it is interesting that the claim was made by Antimachus of Colophon as well (fr. 166 Matthews = 130 Wyss), of whom Nic. is said to be a keen imitator in Σ *Ther.* 3, ἔστι δὲ καὶ ὁ Νίκανδρος ζηλωτὴς Ἀντιμάχου.[20] Matthews (1996, 373) may be right in assuming that Nic. uses Antimachus as an example here, "presumably following the lead of his predecessor". The claim on behalf of Colophon does not necessarily mean that Nic. was convinced of Homer's Colophonian origin, but it does imply that Nic. knew the tradition and had no reason to dissent with it, but rather played the same game. The charged issue of Homer's origin was solved best by Philostratus (ἄπολιν αὐτὸν δοκεῖν, *Her.* 44.2).

(iv) As is already clear in the proem of the *Theriaca*, Nic. is not a humble poet (cf. Gow & Scholfield 1953: 189), needing gods nor Muses for inspiration, but being perfectly well able to expound difficult material in complicated verses easily. In the same vein Nic. fancies himself to be Homeric, and considers himself to be in the same league as his great precursor in epic. The very mention

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20 As Matthews (1996, 373) observes, such claims are not unique: the historiographer Ephorus from Cyma claimed Homer as a fellow Cymaean as well; *FGrH* 2a, 70, F 1 = [Plu.] *Vit.Hom.* 1.2. Cf. Kim 2011, 164–168.

of Homer is thus both a tribute to the master, and an opportunity for Nic. to show his position. Magnelli (2010, 217) may very well be right in explaining the epithet as a way to sound deliberately paradoxical. See also Introduction 5.9; for a possible allusion to *h.Ap.* 165–178 see De Martino 1982; see, however, also Fakas 2001, 54 n. 157.

**καὶ εἰσέτι:** as in *Al.* 629, in the same *sedes*, in the second verse before the end. Looking forward, in an epilogue that wraps up the poem, is an interesting feature of epic, as it is found in some other epic epilogues as well. Aratus does it less explicitly, οὐδέποτε σχεδίως κεν … τεκμήραιο (1154), "you will never (i.e. 'again', 'from now on') make an uniformed judgement" (transl. Kidd). Apollonius' αἵδε δ' ἀοιδαί | εἰς ἔτος ἐξ ἔτεος γλυκερώτεραι εἶεν ἀείδειν | ἀνθρώποις (4.1173–1175), is not dissimilar; cf. Call. fr. 7.13–14 Harder, where the poet asks the Graces to bestow a long life upon his elegies, albeit at the start of the poem, not its end.

The combination καὶ εἰσέτι expresses the hope that the poem just presented will last, either through reperformance (as expressed by Apollonius' voice), or through memory, explicit in both Nic.'s extant didactic poems. Nic.'s focus is, however, on the memory of himself as a poet, unlike Apollonius and Callimachus, who wish for a long life for the poetry, not their makers.

**Νικάνδροιο:** for the narratological distinction between the historical extratextual author Nicander, the implied author 'Nicander', and the (thus far unnamed) intratextual didactic teacher, see Introduction 4.1. The Nicander introduced here appears to correspond to the intratextual didactic teacher, who now finally gives his addressees his name at the end of the poem (although it was already 'revealed' to the reader, if not to the addressee, through the acrostic in 345–353). But this is too simple, as it is not only the teacher speaking here, reflecting on the lessons just presented, but also the poet, looking back on the poem he has created and is now about to conclude. On the level of the implied author therefore, the address is not to Hermesianax and the 'general you', but to the implied reader, who is notified that it is not the teacher's lessons that end here, but the *Theriaca* as a poem. As such these lines are not simply spoken by the teacher, but rather by the poet, who now looks back on his creation and, more importantly, who looks forward to being remembered, not as a teacher, but as the creator of the poem.

This is the first time Nicander's name is given, as a signature or *sphragis* ('seal') to the poem; see Introduction 5.9. The functional value of such a seal is of course limited, as it can hardly prevent forgeries or pseudepigraphy; that function is better fulfilled by the acrostic in 345–353, which gives proof of the author's integrity, and can only be tampered with if it is discovered.

Rather than being a functional seal, the insertion of one's name follows a tradition of signing one's work *within* that work. One of the first instances of this phenomenon is Theognis (19–21), who, unlike e.g. Hesiod and Sappho, who merely tell us their names, introduced a σφρηγίς into his poetry, although the exact interpretation of the unusual phenomenon is still in dispute; see Condello 2009–2010. However, one interpretation at least considers the seal to be Theognis' own name, whose presence within the poem should act as proof of originality. As such, the term is applied to 'signed poetry' in general, as in Hes. *Th.* 22–23, *h.Ap.* 172, Alcm. 39 *PMGF*, and Tim. 791.229 Hordern; see Hordern 2002, 228–229. Among other Hellenistic authors signing their name are Callimachus (*AP* 7.415 = *HE* 1185–1186 = 35 Pf.), Leonidas of Tarentum (*AP* 7.715 = *HE* 2539), Nossis (*AP* 5.170.3 = *HE* 2793, *AP* 7.718.4 = *HE* 2834), [Theoc.] (*AP* 9.434.1 = *Ep.* 27 Gow), Meleager (*AP* 12.257.5 = *HE* 4726), and Posidippus (118.5 AB = *SH* 705). Another interesting instance is—arguably—Aratus, whose use of ἄρρητον in *Phaenomena* 2 has been considered to be a hidden pun on the poet's own name, cf. Levitan 1979, 68 n. 18; Hopkinson 1988, 139; Bing 1990, 281–285; Kidd 1997, 164. Such an interpretation may be relevant here, as it shows two inversions on behalf of Nic.: first to insert his name overtly instead of veiled, thus not remaining ἀρρήτον, 'unnamed', as Aratus does, but clearly defining himself oppositely. Secondly, Nic. inserts his name at the concusion of the poem, in the second verse before the end, instead of at the beginning, in the second verse from the start, as Aratus does.

The mention of the poet's name at the end of the poem is, in retrospect, relevant to its opening as well. Whereas in *Ther.* 3 we get to know the intratextual addressee (viz. Hermesianax) by name, the epilogue openly states the name of the intratextual teacher. As a result pupil and teacher are seen to encase the poem as a ring composition, just like Hesiod and Homer do. The effect is thus a multiform encompassment consisting of Hermesianax and Nicander as a narratological pair, and Hesiod and Homer as a pair of stylistic influence.

958 **μνῆστιν ἔχοις:** the same phrasing is used in *Al.* 629–630, καὶ εἰσέτι Νικάνδροιο | μνῆστιν ἔχοις. There is clearly a shift from the internal to the external addressee here. It makes little sense for the poet to address this line to Hermesianax, even if he is imaginary, as the internal addressee surely does not need to be reminded that it is Nicander who has been talking all this time, particularly if Hermesianax is related to the poet; cf. Σ *Ther.* 3, δῆλον δὲ ὅτι συγγενὴς αὐτοῦ ἦν. It does, on the other hand, make sense to address these lines to the external addressee, be it an audience or readership, for they will be the ones who will bring the poet fame by keeping his poetry—and thus his lasting memory—alive. In the end the poet thus returns to the perennial topic of poets claiming,

or at least desiring, to be remembered long after they are gone, e.g. Call. fr. 7.14 Harder, Posidipp. 118 AB (*SH* 705), Cat. 1.10, Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.1, Lucr. 1.118; cf. Syndikus 2001, 256–257. It is therefore significant that we are not listening to the didactic teacher any longer here, but to an external speaker ('the poet') who is presented to us here for the first time. This is still a speaker introduced by the real, historical, author, but it is an external one, and therefore not partaking in the didactic setting presented in *Ther.* 1–956; see Introduction 4.1.

**τὸν ἔθρεψε:** this is just about all the biographical information of the extratextual life of the poet that can be gathered from the poem, viz. that he was nurtured by the city of Clarus.

**Κλάρου:** called a town here, but it was probably little more than a small settlement in the vicinity of the famous oracle sanctuary of Apollo. It lies 13 km. south of the large and once prosperous city of Colophon, and by the world outside Clarus is often subsumed under and referred to as Colophon, as from the middle of the fourth century BCE Clarus fell under Colophonian rule; see Parke 1985, 123. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.54, *adpellitque Colophona ut Clarii Apollinis oraculo uteretur*. Ovid refers to Antimachus of Colophon as *clario ... poetae* (*Tr.* 1.6.1). The sanctuary is well-attested in earlier literature, e.g. *h.Ap.* 40, *h.Dian.* 5, Anan. 1.2 *IEG*², Th. 3.33.1–2, [Scyl.] 98.20, Call. *Ap.* 70, A.R. 1.308, and was operational until well into the Imperial Age. The founding myth of the sanctuary is known from Σ A.R. 1.308b (*Epigoni* fr. 3 *PEG*); West 2003a, 58–59. There it is told that Clarus is derived from the verb κλάω, as it was the place where Manto, Teiresias' daughter, having come from Delphi to Colophon, wept for the sack of Thebes.

The merging of Clarus and Colophon makes Nic. a fellow townsman—albeit through time—of Homer, at least in one tradition, which may be relevant since Nic. calls himself Homeric; see 957 n. Apart from Nic. and (arguably) Homer, Colophon nurtured—or at least is said to have nurtured—a host of famous poets, including Mimnermus, Phoenix, Xenophanes, Antimachus, and Hermesianax (on whom see 3 n.), to which Nic. adds his name. About his awareness of this Colophonian tradition we can be certain, as is clear from Nic.'s treatise *On the Poets of Colophon*, of which unfortunately nothing but the title surivives; αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Νίκανδρος μέμνηται ... ἐν τῷ Περὶ τῶν ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ποιητῶν, Σ *Ther.* 3. An interesting connection between Nic.'s suggested priesthood at Clarus (see Introduction 2.2), and his fascination for poisonous animals is found in fr. 31 G-S (Schneider = Ael. *NA* 10.49) from the elegiac *Ophiaca*. There Nic. states that Apollo himself purged the woods around his sanctuary from snakes, spiders and scorpions; divine assistence seems to be the best θηριακόν indeed.

**νιφόεσσα:** for the topical use of the epithet see 145 n. As Parke (1985, 130) points out, there is no reason at all to qualify Clarus as 'snowy', considering both the climate and the fact that Clarus lies in a valley, not on top of a mountain. Pausanias, however, (7.5.10) tells us that the river Ales, which streams through the valley, is the coldest in Ionia, in which case the epithet could refer to the river consisting of ice-cold water from snowy mountains further upstream.

**πολίχνη:** an uncommon diminutive of πόλις; not a poeticism (despite its occurrence in Call. *Del.* 41) as is clear from its appearance in e.g. Th. 7.4 or Plu. *Tim.* 11. In Homer's *Catalogue of ships* (i.e. in some receptions of the text, see West 1998, 71) it is still considered to be the name of a particular town in the Megarid (Πολίχνη, *Il.* 2.558); later authors knew of a town called Polichne on Chios (Hdt. 6.36) or in Ionia (Th. 8.14), but by that time the noun was recognised as a diminutive of πόλις as well, next to πολίχνιον (e.g. Pl. *R.* 370d, Isocr. 5.145, Palaeph. 38).

APPENDIX 1

# Structure of the *Theriaca*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1–20** | **Proem** | |
| | 1–7 | Opening, introduction, addressee |
| | 8–20 | Mythological transition |
| **21–156** | **General Precautions** | |
| | 21–34 | Likely snake haunts to avoid when sleeping outside |
| | 35–56 | Producing repellent stench using fumigation |
| | 57–79 | Producing repellent stench by collecting scented herbs |
| | 80–97 | Preparation of a repellent unguent |
| | 98–114 | Preparation of a second repellent unguent |
| | 115–156 | How to avoid snake attacks when unprepared |
| **157–492** | **Part 1*a*—Kinds of Snakes** | |
| | 157–189 | The asp |
| | 190–208 | The *ichneumon* and the asp |
| | 209–257 | The viper |
| | 258–281 | The *cerastes* |
| | 282–319 | The *haemorrhoos* |
| | 320–333 | The *sepedon* |
| | 334–358 | The *dipsas* |
| | 359–371 | The *chersydrus* |
| | 372–383 | The *amphisbaena* |
| | 384–395 | The *scytale* |
| | 396–410 | The king of reptiles |
| | 411–437 | The *dryinas* |
| | 438–447 | The dragon |
| | 448–457 | The dragon and the king of birds |
| | 458–482 | The *cenchrines* |
| | 483–487 | The gecko |
| | 488–492 | Harmless reptiles |

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**493–714 Part 1*b*—Remedies I**

493–496 Second proem
497–499 General advice: fresh herbs
500–508 Cheiron's root
509–519 Birth-wort
520–527 Treacle-clover
528–540 Compound remedies: fustic, agnus castus, savin, rue, savory, asphodel, helxine
541–549 Alcibius' bugloss
550–556 Horehound
557–563 Chicken-brain, field basil, marjoram, boar's liver
564–573 Cypress, all-heal, testicle of a beaver, testicle of a river-horse
574–582 Wormwood, bay, sweet marjoram, curd, animal parts
583–587 Hulwort, cedar, juniper, plane, bishop's weed, stag's scrotum, cypress
588–593 Helxine, barley gruel, olive oil
594–603 Pitch, different kinds of fennel, juniper berries, celery, alexanders, myrrh, cummin
604–619 Spikenard, milk, crab, iris, heath, tamarisk, fleabane, elder, marjoram, tree-medick, spurge
620–624 Boiled frogs, snake's liver, snake's head
625–629 Gold flower, blue pimpernel, marjoram, pot marjoram, savory
630–635 Rhamnus
636–644 Two kinds of viper's bugloss
645–655 Root of *eryngo*, bearsfoot, campanula, field basil, celery, anise
656–665 Different kinds of thistle
666–675 Alcibius' root
676–688 Bark of the Castor-tree, balm-leaves, heliotrope, navelwort, bindweed, hart's tongue, Phlegyan all-heal
689–699 Dried marten's flesh
700–714 Blood of the sea-turtle, wild cummin, curd of the hare

**715–836 Part 2*a*—Other Kinds of Poisonous Animals**

715–768 SPIDERS
715–724 The 'grape-spider'

| | |
|---|---|
| 725–728 | The 'starlet' |
| 729–733 | The blue spider |
| 734–737 | The 'hunter' |
| 738–746 | The 'wasplet' |
| 747–751 | The 'antlet' |
| 752–758 | Beetle-like spiders |
| 759–768 | The *cranocolaptes* |
| | |
| 769–804 | SCORPIONS |
| 769–771 | The white scorpion |
| 772–774 | The scorpion with red jaws |
| 775–776 | The black scorpion |
| 777–781 | The green scorpion |
| 782–785 | The livid scorpion |
| 786–796 | Two crablike species |
| 797–798 | The honey-coloured scorpion |
| 799–804 | The fiery-red scorpion |
| | |
| 805–836 | VARIOUS DANGEROUS CREATURES |
| 805–810 | Two kinds of bees |
| 811–821 | Myriopod, two kinds of wasp, centipede, shrew, *seps*, salamander |
| 822–836 | Murry, sting-ray, sea-snake |

**837–956 Part 2*b*—Remedies II**

| | |
|---|---|
| 837 | Introductory transition |
| | |
| 838–914 | INDIVIDUAL RECIPES |
| 838–847 | Alkanet, potentilla, bramble-flowers, burdock, sorrel, viper's herb, cicamum, hartwort, ground-pine, oak's bark, hedge-parsley, carrot seeds, terebinth-berries, roccella, maiden-hair |
| 848–852 | Cretan alexanders, dead-nettle's root, root of eryngo, rosemary, frankincense, cleavers, helxine, poppy |
| 853–855 | Shoot of the fig-tree, fruit of the wild fig |
| 856–859 | Firethorn, mullein-blossom, haver-grass, celandine, wild carrot, bryony |
| 860–862 | Vervain, rhamnus |
| 863–865 | Feverfew, chicory, hart's tongue, ruddle |

866–875 Squirting cucumber, paliurus, pomegranate, hyssop, rest-harrow, love-in-absence, grape cluster, garlic, coriander, fleabane
876–878 Pepper, garden-cress, pennyroyal, deadly nightshade, mustard
879–884 Leak, nettle, squill, purse-tassels, edderwort, rhamnus, pine-seed
885–895 Scorpius, waterlilies, pistachio nuts, hedge-parsley, mytle-berries, sage, fennel, hedge-mustard, wild chick-pea
896–900 Melilot, dropwort, corn-cockle, plantain, rose, gillyflower
901–906 Knot-grass, depilatory, hyacinth
907–914 Trefoil, silphium, tufted thyme, samphire, lavender-cotton, anise, Libyan roots

915–933 TREATMENT OF THE WOUND
915–920 General remedy in case of emergency
921–933 Poison draining, cauterizing, curative unguent

934–956 GENERAL REMEDY
934–956 Birthwort, iris, spikenard, all-heal, pellitory, wild carrot, black bryony, peony, black hellebore, native sodium carbonate, cummin, fleabane, stavesacre, bay's berries, treed-medick, horse-moss, cyclamen, poppy-juice, seeds of agnus castus, balsam, cassia, cow-parsnip, salt, hare's curd, crab, juice of cleavers

**957–958 Epilogue: *sphragis***

APPENDIX 2

# The Ascalabus Story (*Ther.* 483–487)

The highly elliptical story of the transformation of the boy Ascalabus into a gecko, treated briefly in *Ther.* 483–487, is in fact a complex amalgam of different elements. Some of these were known from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, others seem to have been Nic.'s own invention. Others elements can be deduced from, among others, Ovid. Nic.'s conflation is thus based on different stories, the main elements of which are as follows:

(1) Demeter, tired and thirsty because of her wanderings in search of Persephone, reaches Eleusis and is invited into the house of the wise Metaneira, wife of Celeüs, king of Eleusis, and is offered some sort of grog or posset. Because she is drinking greedily she is mocked by Metaneira's son Ascalabus, who is consequently punished by the goddess as she throws the remains of the drink to him, after which he turns into a gecko. This is the version Nic. tells us, although highly abbreviated, in the *Theriaca*.

(2) Σ tells us the name of Metaneira's son was not Ἀσκάλαβος but Ἄμβας, which leaves out the aetiology of the gecko's name; perhaps the aetiological play was an addition of Nic.

(3) In Antoninus Liberalis' version (which is basically Nic.'s version in his *Heteroeumena*) Demeter reaches Attica, instead of Eleusis in particular, the woman who receives the goddess is named Misme, and the boy is called Ascalabus. When he sees the goddess drinking the grog in one draught the boy starts to laugh mockingly and suggests to hand her a cauldron or cask instead of just a cup. After this the goddess pours the remains of the grog on him in anger. As a result he is turned into a gecko, and the splashes of grog on its body become the spots that are characteristic of the gecko's appearance, hence its name of 'spotted lizard'. As an additional punishment Antoninus tells that the animal needs to spend its life in the dirt (καὶ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ δίαιτα παρ' ὀχετόν), concluded by the words ὁ δ' ἀποκτείνας κεχαρισμένος γίνεται Δήμητρι. The additional aetiologies (the spots on the gecko's body, the reason it is hateful to men and, apparently, the reason why he has to live in the dirt, like the crawling snakes) are not found in the *Theriaca*.

(4) Ovid tells the same story, but without any mention of the name of the woman or her son. As he tells us of the humble dwelling (*tectam stramine*

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… *casam parvasque fores*, 5.447–448) of the old woman, Ovid clearly does not have a queen (like Nic.'s Metaneira) in mind.[1] In addition Ovid tells us the boy was made into a small creature, in order to keep him from doing harm (*inque brevem formam, ne sit vis magna nocendi* | *contrahitur*, 5.457–458). The same aetiology about the spotted lizard is found as in Antoninus, which could point at a common source, not unlikely to be Nic.'s *Heteroeumena*.[2]

(5) Although only partially related to the story of the metamorphosis of Ascalabus, the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* shares many elements with Nic.'s treatment in *Ther.* 484–487: the wanderings of the grieved Demeter to Eleusis, the encounter between Demeter and queen Metaneira, the appearance of Celeüs as Metaneira's husband, the acceptance of Demeter into Metaneira's dwelling (all found in Ov. *Fast.* 4.505 ff.), the presence of Metaneira's son, and the well Callichorum, the mocking of the goddess (not by Metaneira's son, but by her elder servant Iambe), and the goddess being angered (later on in the story, and not by Metaneira's son).

(6) Another reference to the story of how the wandering Demeter reached Eleusis is found in the *Alexipharmaca*, where it is said that the goddess drank the posset in the city of Hippothoon (an Eleusinian king), because of the brazen words of Iambe (*Al.* 130–132).[3] According to Σ *Al.* 130a Hippothoon was Metaneira's husband, which is confirmed by Σ E. *Or.* 964; ἡ Δηώ, νῆστις περιήρχετο ζητοῦσα αὐτήν. καὶ δὴ περιερχομένη καὶ ζητοῦσα αὐτὴν ὑπεδέχθη ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις τοῦ Ἱπποθόοντος ὑπὸ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ Μετανείρας; Gow & Scholfield 1953, 192.

(7) Later versions are found in Clemens of Alexandria (*Protr.* 2.20) and Arnobius (*Adv. nat.* 5.25).

1 The woman is called Metanira, however, in Ov. *Fasti* 4.539, where a variant of *h.Cer.* is related. In *Fasti* 4.507–508 Ovid explains that the place that later became known as Ceres' Eleusis, was still Celeüs' rural plot back then.

2 The story of Ascalaphus (sic), a boy with a remarkably similar-sounding name, who is transformed into an owl by Persephone ([Apollod.] 2.126 W. = 2.5.12 F., Ov. *Met.* 5.533–550) does not seem to be related in any way to the story of Ascalabus (cf. Celoria 1992, 169), nor is Ares' son Ascalaphus, who occurs seven times in the *Iliad*.

3 The aetiology of Iambe as the inventor of the mocking iambic verse is of no relevance to Nic.'s versions; only after she started mocking Demeter the goddess cheered up and was prepared to mitigate her sorrow and accept the drink.

It is clear that different authors (or their sources) added different elements to the story. First there is the opposition between the royal palace of the king and queen of Eleusis (cf. *h.Cer.* 171, μέγαν δόμον) as opposed to the humble dwelling in which the goddess is invited in other versions; cf. Ov. *Met.* 5.445–461, *Fast.* 4.531 (*parvos initura penates*). Here we see the common Hellenistic topic of gods or heroes being welcomed into the houses of humble folk, cf. Callimachus' *Hecale* (which may well have influenced Ovid's rendering of the tale; see Eitrem 1900) and the beginning of the third book of Callimachus' *Aetia*, where Heracles is invited by the humble rustic Molorcus (fr. 54b Harder = *SH* 257). Secondly there is the conflation of the wanderings of Demeter (as known from the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*) and the metamorhosis of the boy into a lizard. A third element that varies is the mocking of the goddess. In the *Hymn to Demeter* the goddess is cheered by the servant Iambe and is thankful for it, whereas in the Ascalabus-story the goddess is angered because of the boy's impudence. Fourthly the element of Demeter as an angry goddess is found in all versions, although in the Ascalabus-story it is aimed at the boy, whereas in the *Hymn to Demeter* it is Metaneira, with whom the goddess finds fault. A fifth element is the reversal of the queen's son: in the *Hymn to Demeter* Demophon, who is the good son, is nursed by the goddess, whereas in Nic.'s versions Ascalabus, the impertinent son, is punished.

In addition to this there is the relation between the drink offered to Demeter and a specific Eleusian cult. Although not mentioned by Nic. or Antoninus Liberalis, the posset, called κυκέων (*h.Cer.* 210), plays an important role in the myth, as it explains aetiologically for its role in the Eleusinian mysteries. Thus, originally the story of Demeter's acceptance into a humble dwelling served to explain how the *cyceon*, a frugal drink and according to Richardson (1964, 344) "a mixture of grain (ἄλφι), liquid (water, milk, honey, oil), often seasoned with herbs (pennyroyal, thyme, mint, etc.)", came to be part of the Eleusinian Demeter cult. The connection with the metamorphosis of the hostess' son is probably later, and may even have been Nic.'s addition. If, however, the offering of the rustic *cyceon*—a poor peasant's drink—to the goddess is connected with the frugality of the goddess' poor hosts, than there is no need to see the Hellenistic topic of the god's welcome into a poor man's hut here; see Delatte 1955, 27–36. For an alternative overview of the myth's versions see Forbes-Irving 1990, 309–310.

It is thus evident that Nic.'s version, at least as told in the *Theriaca*, is a conflation of the Metaneira-story (as known from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*) on the one hand, and the myth of Misme and her son Ascalabus/Ambas on the other hand. Most of the background was already there, provided by the Homeric hymn and the tradition of the *cyceon*. The elements of the wandering

Demeter, the mocking, the son, the posset, the goddess' anger and the very names of her hosts. What remains unclear is how the myth was told in the *Heteroeumena*, and what the original folklore version of the story was, if there ever was a single one. The fact that Nic.'s treatment of the myth in the *Theriaca* is not only concise but also too brief to understand fully is clearly due to the fact that he has his earlier treatment of the myth in the *Heteroeumena* in mind, but to what degree Nic. is varying on his earlier report is hard to determine, given the lack of information on other sources.

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